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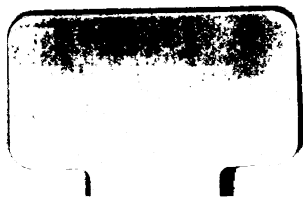
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KD18098



To Reginald Storrow.
With love from
his sister Lily.

Christmas.

IN GREEN UNDERWOOD

BY

LYDIA JACKSON DALE



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TO MY FATHER

“And time remember’d is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.”
— *Swinburne.*

CONTENTS.

	Page
SPRING COLOR	9
BY VERMONT STREAMS	14
BLOSSOM TIME	27
FROM THE HILLSIDE	43
THE ILLUMINATION	66
THE CALL OF THE WHITE BIRCHES	77
A ROADSIDE CHRONICLE	80
A VILLAGE IN NEW ENGLAND	101
THE VALLEY OF STREAMS	110

SPRING COLOR.

A morning in early April among the hills of Northern New England. The sun is bright, the sky is blue, and the air, though still with a keenness in it, yet has a suggestion of warmer days to come. As we drive along the muddy, very muddy road, an inexperienced eye would detect but little promise of spring. The leaf buds to be sure are visible, but so they have been all winter, and have no appearance of unfolding their hidden treasures; the fields are brown and bare; the silhouettes of the trees against the sky stand with every twig distinctly outlined. On the hillsides, covered with dry grass, you may still see patches of snow under the trees and on the northern slopes. The river banks are heaped high with great cakes of ice, left when the solid mass broke in the river and went sweeping down stream. Even the birds have, as yet, come back only in small numbers; the robin, the song sparrow, the junco, the bluebird and the phoebe. Occasionally you catch sight of a couple of crows, walking leisurely and self-complacently in the meadows, and a few days ago I saw some ducks swimming in the river, diving and turning somersaults, or skimming along in the air close to the surface of the water.

Nevertheless, spring is slow to advance in these

northern hills, winter still holds sway, and the casual observer might wonder where is the promise of spring.

Look more closely, train your eye to notice the varied tints of trees and shrubs, and you will find that the color of the woods and fields, like the poetry of earth, is never dead. On the farther side of the river stands a clump of poplars, the rear guard of the trees which cover the slope of the hill. Their trunks are a soft grayish green while their tops have a suspicion of pale yellow, mixed cunningly with the green of the bark. They give out a tender, faint glow, like a delicate mist, rising against the background of hemlocks. Farther along are some sheep in the meadow, nibbling last year's grass. Startled by the noise of the carriage wheels they scamper off, but as I and my camera advance, curiosity gets the better of their alarm, and the more bold turn to take a good look at the intruder. Here again you see on the hillside behind them the same shimmer of light from the distant colony of poplars, giving an enchanting indistinctness to the far landscape.

The maples are much darker in tone, but they, too, have a touch of dull red high up among the branches, not the brilliant tint of the flowers, it is too early as yet for those, but a bit of coloring in the twigs where the sap has begun to stir. You wonder how they can spare any sap for personal adornment, when in the sugar orchards and even by the roadside or in the

door-yards, the precious juice is dropping into the pail. Scarcely a tree is devoid of this ornament, all sorts of vessels are utilized, and as you drive along you notice lard pails, milk cans, iron kettles and tin dippers hung below the dripping sweetness. Try the fresh sap, looking as clear as water, and you will find that "sweetness" is only a prophetic title, the liquid has a peculiarly flat taste, very slightly sweetened, and you realize that, without human ingenuity, the delights of maple sugar would be lost to the world. Do you see that wreath of faint blue smoke, rising slowly among the trees on the slope of the hill? There the "sugar-ing off" is going on — in a small wooden shed with a tumble-down chimney. The "sugar-water" is brought in large casks from the various trees and by an ingenious yet simple arrangement is heated gradually over a large oven — fed with logs — till it is transformed into the delicious maple syrup. Sometimes, the primitive fashion prevails of a fire of sticks in the open air, beneath a large iron kettle in which the sap is boiled, and occasionally the children will do their own boiling on the family stove.

Along the water courses stand the willows, their tips looking as if King Midas had touched them, so golden are they, lending a radiance as of sunshine to the landscape. They are the first harbingers of spring, showing a faint color when all else is gray and dull.

Look up at the hillside where the stems of the white birches gleam among the evergreens, justifying their pretty name of "white ladies". In the open meadows you may see the shoots of dogwood — vividly red — growing in communities like the top of a pollard willow, but nearer the ground. They make a striking contrast to the yellow-topped willows, and suggest the brilliant hues of autumn. The hemlocks, though not yet boasting the fresh green tips, so feathery and delicate, yet are an essential part of nature's box of colors, their dark green serving as background for the deciduous trees, and their sombreness enhanced by the patches of snow which still linger beneath their branches.

See how many shades of brown are offered at this season — the dull tone of the withered grass, the pale buff of last year's golden rod and ferns, the rich brown of the plowed land down there in the meadow, the beech and oak leaves still clinging to the branches or spread like a carpet on the ground. The graceful catkins of the alders and black birches are growing longer and fuller, and have their place also in the scale of browns — the alders nearly chocolate in color, while the birches are a brighter, softer shade. Close to the earth are many more diversities of hue, the lichens on the tree trunks or on the old rail fences and stone walls, while the rocks in the bed of the brook and the fallen logs in the swamps are vivid with

the rich emerald green of the mosses, and even the stones by the wayside have an endless variety of tone.

There is a bluebird flying across the field — like a bit of the sky! He appeals to the eye as well as the ear. A yellow rooster, his feathers glistening in the sunlight, is leading his family across the yard, with an air of conscious importance.

Look across the meadow, and up the slope to the sky line, you will see several horses being led home after their morning's work behind the plough, and at one side stands the low white house, with its green blinds, picturesquely grouped with a couple of red barns, while the invariable elms rising above the farm buildings complete the picture, so typical of New England.

All those are signs of spring, and the enumeration of them may serve to bring to your notice the many colors so richly lavished, the tuning of the instrument before the symphony begins.

BY VERMONT STREAMS.

After the long, hard winter, the river begins to stir in its sleep, and to find its heavy burden of ice somewhat oppressive. The sun gains each day in power, warming the air, and imparting some of its heat to the water, beneath its coverlid, till, at length, one day in early April the waters rise in rebellion, and throw off the icy yoke. The solid mass, two or three feet thick, perhaps even more, cracks and heaves, till at last it is swept irresistibly down stream, and, as the country folk say, "the ice goes out".

Not quietly is the revolution effected; many traces are left of the struggle. At each bend of the stream the ice refuses to change its direction, and consequently the sheet is broken, and hurled violently upon the shore; heavy cakes are tossed upon the bank or ground against the trees on the edge, scraping off the bark and even uprooting them. Where the shore is low, the meadows are strewn with the debris till it looks like the remains of the ice-age. Sometimes the great blocks are a clear greenish blue as if from a glacier lake. These glisten in the sunlight, and add another tint to the landscape, making a striking contrast to the white snow and the deep blue water. When the huge fragments, cut smooth and square as if by machinery, are piled across the road, it is a work

of much time to break and drag them off, and the way may be impassable for a week. The whole effect is inconceivable to one who has not seen it, and shows the tremendous power of ice and water in one small river.

After the river is free once more, the waters sink to their natural level, and the stream ripples on, smiling in the sunshine, looking most innocent and unconscious of the destruction left behind it, and as if surprised at the devastation on its banks. It will be almost May before the last vestiges disappear, though under the hot sun at noonday the cakes of ice are slowly dripping and growing furrowed on their upper surface. Occasionally they have been turned upside down in their onslaught, and bear the traces of the mud from the clay bottom, where the river had been frozen solid.

When we turn aside to the smaller streams, we see less appearance of winter's rule, and begin to believe in the approach of spring. At this season, when the last snows are melting on the heights, and the ground becomes saturated with moisture, every little furrow on the sides of the hills is transformed into a rivulet, every little brook is swollen, the lesser streams look like rivers, and all come hurrying down the slopes, or rushing through the meadows, as if time were of the utmost value, and they must be quick about their work. Such an air of business and importance as

even the spring run assumes, seeming to say, "Make way — I can stop for nobody!"

Here is a brook which rises in a pond on a neighboring hill, and runs down through the woods, coming out into the open on the top of the slope, tripping lightly over the shelving rocks in a succession of tiny cascades, crossing under the road and through the field to the larger stream below. It rejoices in the name of Hedgehog Brook, and I wish I knew what adventures of boy or farmer led to its christening, and what part Stickly Prickly played therein.

At the mouth of Hedgehog Brook, where it empties into the South Branch, looking across the foaming rapids to the opposite hillside, you see the dark hemlocks fringing the bank. Above it the dull yellow of the withered grass on the upland pasture, a thread of white showing where a little brooklet runs swiftly across it, while against the sky-line are the feathery birches, gracefully swaying in the breeze, and softening the edge of the picture.

Let us follow up this South Branch for a little distance. I like its sturdy country name, suggestive of plain farmers who want to describe clearly where a neighbor lives, or which road they must take to the village store to exchange their farm products for tea and sugar.

Here comes the Branch, tumbling under the wooden bridge, broken into white foam by the rocky bed; here

curling round a jutting stone, swirling over a sunken log, here rushing along, black and swift and smooth, encroaching at times on the low shore till a tree here and there can almost boast of being a "castle girded with its moat", it is so nearly encircled.

Now we reach a more level stretch with the snow still lingering on the slopes, showing white beneath the trees. See how the light stems of the poplars stand out in relief against the darker evergreens, making an effect of sunlight, even though the sky be gray. There is a patch of vivid red, telling us of the sap which begins to run more vigorously in some of the woody shrubs along the water courses.

A bend in our road brings fresh beauties to light, where the brimming flood rushes tumultuously around a curve, past the little promontory where the hemlocks and spruces are thickly crowded together, while on the bank stands tall and straight, the white stem of a birch tree, as if to contrast with the dark foliage across the water.

Far up the valley in the opposite direction is a ravine with steep sides, known in local parlance as the Gulf. The brook which is fed by the moisture from its slopes I like to call the Gulf Stream. As we drive along, hugging our heavy wraps, we wish it shared its namesake's characteristic of warmth, for the air is sharp and keen, and we realize that there is still much more snow on the hillsides and under the trees.

How pretty this little turn will be in early summer, when the elders and birches and willows shall have put on their dress of leaves. But to my mind, the bare twigs have a charm all their own, as you trace the various ramifications more clearly than is possible when the leaves are out. The old rail fence bordering the stream, moss-grown and weather-stained, is picturesque in its winding, and later would be hidden behind the leafy screen. See where the water is arrested and turned aside by the fallen branches, making miniature cascades and rapids in its course.

Crossing the high bridge just where a saw-mill has set the river to work, we catch a glimpse of the mill dam, with the delicate haze of trees beyond, and a little house on the far slope of the hill, half-hidden already by the swelling buds on the tree tops. A great oak overshadows the mill, and in the yard are piles of freshly cut lumber and sawed boards, giving out that delicious resinous, woodsy odor, so clean and invigorating.

Here is a community of willows, with their stems close together as they spring from the parent root, crowding to the brink for their water supply. The more adventurous lean out across the waves in a social, inquiring fashion, as if to send a greeting across to the more dignified and stately trees on the opposite bank. Just above are rapids, looking like white furrows on the surface of the water as it rushes by.

As we rise higher we find more snow, and the boulders in the bed of the brook are covered with a white coat, while the grasses and shrubs glisten as if cased in diamonds. In some places the snow still lies deep along the margin, but you can see where the overhanging edge on the bank has been cut away by the warmer water, leaving only a thin roof of ice. Soon this will melt away, and the grasses and ferns will have their chance to show what can be done when the spring sun gains in power.

A pair of phoebe birds seemed to be meditating a nest under an old bridge or in the branches of a maple near by. I stood for fifteen minutes listening to the scolding of Mistress Phoebe, and so engrossed was she with her objections to my presence that my own very imperfect imitation of her remarks excited her violently. I shall never know what atrocious things I may have said to her in her own language. She hopped from twig to twig of the large maple tree overhanging the bridge, expressing her disapproval with much energy, and with no trace of fear or respect for the higher creation. Her tone was quick and insistent, very different from the usual soft two notes in which she utters her own name. Altogether, I must admit she was most feminine and talkative, not to say cross. A charming outlook the young couple will have. The brook hurrying along past the banks thickly fringed with low trees, and the great maple

overhanging the water, the bridge of planks with a broad rail on which the lichens have gained a footing, and where the farmers will pass in their creaking wagons. Lower down, some tall straight yellow birches with their ragged bark, beneath which the stream spreads out over the more marshy land. All this will ere long be full of tender green, and the white stars of the blood-root, the gorgeous yellow of the marsh marigolds, the white violets loving the damp nooks, and their step-cousins, the dog-tooth violets with their spotted leaves, will soon make a rich carpet — while among them the ferns will unroll their graceful fronds and doff their fur coats in which they are now wrapped safe and warm.

A little further along is a typical winter scene, having no hint of the softening influence of spring, but cold and bleak and bare, the tree trunks rising like skeletons out of the snow. It is interesting to see how many sharp contrasts of climate are to be found in following up the course of one small stream in one day.

See where some miniature avalanche, perhaps, has set the stones rolling from the hillside above, till they have landed in the brook, and formed themselves into a barrier. It looks like human handiwork, and it is possible that years ago the farmers did build a dam, so that they might have a deeper pool in which to wash the sheep before shearing. In either case, there

is the dam, instead of the more customary rapids, with the network of icicles where the cold nights have frozen the drops as they perilously lingered on the twigs, caught among the stones.

What a severe study in black and white we have here; the sun glinting through the dark branches on the dancing little waves beneath, and on the wet stones round which they hurry, foaming, while the black mud of the road and the sombre tree trunks on the side slopes are relieved by the white patches of snow by the wayside, and the longer stretches lying unbroken above.

And here the sudden turn in the stream has given an added impetus to the gathered waters, till they have strewn the bank with debris, branches and twigs caught in the eddies and on the overhanging roots and fibres. Now let us leave our friend the Gulf Stream, and take a peep at another brook. Rising on the hillside, it more quickly falls into smoother paths and finds less to fret about. It is named most appropriately Fork Brook, for it branches and ramifies on very slight provocation, as it runs through the flat meadows where the soil is soft and easily penetrated, and the force of the water, augmented by the melting snows of each successive year, has worn numerous channels. If we could look at it from a balloon at a sufficient height, its course would resemble a child's printing of —A— and —Y— and —V— with the flowers and

grasses filling in between the lines. With no apparent reason the waters divide and sub-divide and then return to a common bed once more, and most unmathematically, each sub-division looks as large as its parent, as it runs swiftly through the meadow—the long grasses of last year swaying in its flow.

How picturesque is this country bridge, the sides formed by white birch stems, with the bark glistening in the spring sun! One finds many an unexpected point of view in endeavoring to take a picture, but it is hard to put on paper, either by pen or lens, the charm of the water rippling over a stone, gurgling musically in a corner under the bank, eddying round a sunken root, tumbling over the rocky bed, or rushing beneath the bridge, with the spring sunshine pouring down and glorifying it all, while the promise of the coming days is seen in each feathery tree tip and each touch of color, as the sap pours fresh life through the branches.

The further side of the bridge gives us a study in birches. See them along the edge of the field, slender and graceful, with such delicate tracery against the blue sky. The hillside beyond is dotted here and there with pine trees, the survivors of the forest which once covered its slopes. Here you have the outlook in the other direction, up stream, where the water hurries down to the birches, breaking into foam over the rocky bed. Above it is a growth of hemlocks and

pinces, the old stumps standing gnarled and bleached among the grass and yellow ferns of last summer.

Look at this primitive foot bridge, merely a log thrown across one of Fork Brook's many branches, but giving a touch of human companionship to the picture otherwise lonely and deserted. One spruce tree, symmetrical as its wont, stands like a sentinel to guard the breast work made by the stone wall with the rails above it.

As we ascend Aqueduct Brook, we may find a few noteworthy bits. A typical New England board fence, quite ignoring the fact that it has to cross the stream, and pursuing its path of duty with a sublime disregard of obstacles. Incidentally, it makes a possible bridge if one is in pursuit of birds' nests, or berries, or photographs. The distant farm buildings are cosily nestled under the protection of the softly rounded hill, which keeps off the harsh winds of winter.

A more quiet corner of the brook lies here sheltered by a fallen tree, possibly brought down by the spring freshet, and caught by a large boulder. It makes a dark pool, which later will be loved of the trout, and perhaps a turtle will laboriously mount the log and sun himself for hours, unless disturbed by some passer by, when a sudden plunge will reveal his whereabouts. The little wild creatures of the wood will come to drink in the quiet spot, among them perhaps a deer,

driven down by hunger nearer the dwellings of man, or even a bear with a relish for tender lamb.

Now we chance upon the signs of man, where the maple trees stand along the brookside, each bearing its spout and tin pail to catch the dripping sap. Some patriarchs carry several vessels on their shapely trunks, and it is astonishing to find how long a tree can be drained of its life-blood, year by year, without losing its vitality.

Just across the brook is snow and ice and every aspect of winter, a cold keen wind comes from the hills beyond, while on the southern slope are these indications of spring. Truly we live in a land of contrasts, and winter holds us by one icy hand, while, as we shiver in his grasp, spring beckons enticingly. See where the slender stems of a colony of birches are springing out of the deep snow, giving a suggestion of a Christmas card, while the water, dashing along at their feet, shows the increased volume due to the melting snows on the more sunny uplands. The feathery boughs of the hemlocks make a lacelike tracery against the sky, and their dark outlines are relieved by the white mist of the birches. Nature knows how to make a suitable background for her pictures.

One more touch of New England country life, showing the curious mingling of modern and primitive customs, which forms an interesting feature of our civi-

lization. More and more the need of closer intercourse is felt in the outlying districts, letters are exchanged more frequently, various plans for study are devised, having the mails as the basis of communication, and "rural delivery" is to be found even on lonely roads. Here is one of the country post-offices, these five boxes in a row by the fence, visited daily by the postman on his long rounds, up and down the hills, where the snow sometimes makes the road almost impassable. In going through such an one recently, we found a huge drift entirely blocking the way, and we were forced to turn into the pasture, and pursue our course over uneven ground, stone walls and steep pitches, to the imminent danger of our wheels and springs. It gives a pioneer flavor to the postman's life, as he faces the cold and storms of winter on the bleak hillsides to bring the mail and the touch of city life and interest to the isolated farm-houses, so shut off from personal contact with the great world outside.

I hope, however, that the greater convenience will not do away with the village store, and that the neighbors will still gather there, round the stove in the back room or on the benches in front, and gossip over their pipes, while the old horses stand patiently, hitched to the railing outside. I should be sorry to lose the village store and its patrons, even to get the mail a trifle more quickly.

I have led you a long way up and down the country streams, and hope you have not been wearied in the journey. Go yourself, when the waters begin to flood the earth once more, and see how much beauty may be found by the wayside.

BLOSSOM TIME.

What a world of suggestion lies in the word blossom! A riot of color and perfume, marvels of graceful form and delicate texture, all the evanescent charm of the spring and the richer luxuriance of the summer are brought vividly before us by the mere words on a printed page.

All winter, the stems of the willows by the side of the stream or the pond have held a remnant of last summer's brightness; they are a soft yellow, lighting up the landscape and prophesying of the future. By and by the maples in the distance are tinged with red, more and more vivid, till one day we find the small bright blossoms closely set on each slender twig. The bees have found them out; sit down beneath a tree some summer morning and hear their busy hum, or watch that fat yellow and black bumble bee drink his full of the spicy sweetness, and then, alighting on the ground, walk leisurely over the dry leaves till he disappears, perhaps to sleep off the unwonted indulgence. Look at the catkins on the birches and alders, low drooping clusters of tiny flowers, almost indistinguishable without a glass, and yet so full of pollen that your fingers are dusted with gold if you touch them. The dry cones of last year stand up stiff and straight on the alders, on the same branch as the pendulous

catkins, and the outline of the two against the sky as you look up is as beautiful as any Japanese decoration. Soon the elms begin to show their flowers, less noticeable than the maples, but giving to the little twigs and drooping branches the misty, fuller outline, so inimitably graceful, and so typical of our New England. The trees have a soft buff tint, looking like dull gold against the sky where the west wind has blown it clear of clouds. Some of the maples are green in their flowering, one with hanging clusters like bunches of grapes, another with the little pale green flowers standing up straight. Soon the keys on delicate threads will be ready for the wind to carry them across the fields and scatter the seed abroad. The poplars come with another tone of color, gray-green yellow, diffusing a soft steady radiance as of pale sunlight, in contrast with the evergreens against which they are often placed. Later, the oaks, which have stood bare and apparently unmoved while their neighbors have been taking on brighter color and fuller outlines, show the pale pink leaf tips, a miracle of delicacy and softness, and hanging beneath these are the long tassels of green. Another species is all in tints of copper, the little leaves a tender shade and the catkins deeper in hue. In the larger trees the sturdy trunk and picturesque gnarled branches are glorified by this charm of the baby leaves, still tightly wrinkled from their close wrappings. It is a fleeting picture, how-

ever, soon the leaves will unfold more fully and become a rich green, the indentations will grow more marked, some sharply and deeply cut, like the black and scarlet oaks, while the white oaks are more bluntly rounded, and the full glory of the thick, luxuriant foliage will cover the branches, affording shelter to the birds and squirrels, while the cattle gather in its shadow.

While the maples and elms and oaks are thus claiming their right to be called blossoming trees, let us see what is doing in the woods and fields. Come with me beneath the bare branches, where the ground is thick with last year's fallen leaves and the resinous pine needles, and if you are a novice you may taste the flavor of a new and fascinating experience. Push aside the withered leaves, led by a delicious fragrance, there is a pink and white cluster which you know must be the mayflower; follow up the twining, brown woody stem, and you find another and yet another bunch of the hidden sweetness. It may be because of its early appearance, almost the pioneer among the wild flowers, it may be from the surprise of its beauty among the dry brown leaves, but I think no one who has ever picked the mayflower in its native woods can forget the delight of it.

Now in a moment, so it seems, come a host of other friends to whisper a greeting. Here is the shy hepatica, just peeping out from under its rough little

gray coat, and showing the delicate blue petals like a star among last year's leaves. The new leaves come only when the flowers are gone.

There in a damp shady spot is the blood-root, its petals so purely white that they almost throw out rays of light, the flowers, so dainty and high bred looking, in strange contrast with the rough, coarse leaves which appear as they are fading. Break the stem, and you find the name is well given, for your fingers are stained with the orange juice.

Across the meadow, looking like a belated patch of snow, is a great colony of houstonias, covering the ground for a long distance, while another bit of color is where the swamp violets grow in great profusion, each long stemmed flower arranged amid its green leaves as if ready to be gathered, while in a damp corner are the sweet white violets, small and delicately pencilled with black. Here, too, where the water comes close about its roots, and the soil is black and rich, you will find the Jack-in-the-pulpit. See the inner side of the curious leaf which folds like a hood over the preacher within; it is beautifully striped with dark brown, while the green spadix, looking like a pistil, is in reality a spike of tiny flowerets, clustered thickly together.

Farther down the meadow is a real bog, with only hummocks of grass for a foot hold. Be careful as you step, or you will get a wetting in the black ooze,

when you are lured on by great bunches of the gay cowslips, or marsh marigolds. If they were only uncommon, how much admiration would be excited by the brilliant golden flowers, among the dark green leaves, a sufficient decoration in themselves, and requiring no further setting. How different flowers are in this respect, some need additional green to set off their beauty, while others, like cowslips or mountain laurel, are sufficiently adorned as they naturally grow.

Do you see that bed of striped, spotted leaves under the trees? Wait till the right moment comes and you will have a picture equal, in my opinion, to Wordsworth's daffodils. Perhaps not ten thousand, if that were anything but a poet's license, but a goodly array of graceful yellow blossoms, the long narrow petals, a soft brown when closed, but opening and turning back like a lily, as indeed it is, though rejoicing in the misnomer of dog-tooth violet. Swaying on their slender stems they open in the sunlight like yellow butterflies, the bright faces looking up at you as if they had caught the cheer of the sunshine and morning freshness. I suppose all of us, who, as children, had the good fortune to live in the country, keep an especial fondness for the flowers we knew best then, and to me no blossom brings quite the delight of ever-new discovery and possession as the dog-tooth violet. Many a May day did I start out long before breakfast, run through the wet grass on the lawn down

to the thicket so full of the wild flowers I loved, and, with a lurking fear that perhaps this year they had forgotten to come in season, push my way through the bushes and brambles to the open space I knew. No, they had not forgotten, there was the great bed of them, nodding and beckoning as they swayed to and fro in the soft breeze, lighting up the leafless branches around with their smiling golden faces, evidently waiting to be gathered and carried home in a hot, eager little hand. Yes, I love the dog-tooth violets.

While we are still in the swampy places, let us look for the rhodora. There it is, covering the ground with the low bushes of pinkish purple; "spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook, to please the desert and the sluggish brook". Never was a botanical description more exact and definite than Emerson's lines "To the Rhodora", with the added charm of a poet's touch. Whatever the sage's merits as a poet may be, he surely wrote a true poem when he described what was perhaps his favorite flower. Each word is well chosen and paints the picture with a sure hand; we see it all again as we have seen it in reality, the purple flowers on the bare woody stem, no leaves as yet, standing just beside the spot where the slow little brook emerges from under fallen logs and moves along between deep mossy banks, dark and still and clear. The petals flutter down when their day is over,

and float tranquilly on the surface of the water, the color contrasting richly with the sombre mirror.

We must hasten if we are to follow the footsteps of spring, for she goes swiftly now as the warmer days come. The cherry trees are covered with snowy blossoms, little caring whether they stand decorously in a yard or on the farm, with the thought of a later appearance in the market-place, or whether they are wild cherry trees out in the woods, only ripening their fruit for the birds and the small boys. There the shad-bush comes to join them, another marvel of white bloom, though less delicate in detail than the cherries. In another day or two, the pear trees break forth into white flowers, but their leaves are farther advanced, and set off the snowy petals with a bright green background.

The great spectacle of the apple blossoms is yet to come, when all over New England spreads a wave of pink and white, deluging the fields and hills with color, and turning every gnarled trunk and twisted limb into a bower, fit for a fairy princess. Such an endless variety of tint, from the pure white petals, fully open to the sunlight, to the pink buds, shut tightly as yet against the wooing of the south wind. Stand under a blossoming tree and look up at one after another of the perfect sprays; here all white and fully blown, there the sequence of bud and blossom, there the close little buds, deep red in color. The bleak hillsides

where the orchards have been planted are now a billowy mass of soft color, here is a rosy flush, there a snowy whiteness, showing with double charm against the gray weather-beaten roofs of house and farm buildings, or perhaps a luxuriant bough thrown across an old red barn. There are a couple of apple trees picturesquely grouped with some tall pines in the pasture, the feathery dark green boughs making an excellent foil to the full rounded contours and delicate color. Turn where you will, the country is all lovely at this season, and you are kept busy with the calls for admiration on every side. The lilacs are just coming into bloom by every porch and door yard, and the purple and white bunches may often be seen where nothing is left but the cellar of what was once a home, now overgrown and filled with green.

We sometimes say, a bit scornfully, that we care only for wild flowers, but at this season distinctions are forgotten, and we welcome the shrubs and trees which owe their existence to man with as fresh a delight as the denizens of the woods and meadows, all are new, all are beautiful, all tell us the tale of the passing of winter.

See where the ferns are unrolling their green fronds, some curved like a shepherd's crook, reminding us of a bishop's crozier as we may have seen it on a stone in a cathedral cloister, others tightly folded and pushing their way straight above the brown earth. They

are still wrapped in the soft wool which has kept them safe and warm all winter under the snow. Examine these three kinds of the *Osmunda*, so different in their mode of growth; the royal fern, or *Regalis*, with its pinnate leaves like a locust or ash, pale red on the tips, and spreading in luxuriant masses in the moist meadow lands; the cinnamon fern sending up its fertile frond with the brown spores, quite independent of the others, straight and dark like a stick of cinnamon, while the *Osmunda Interrupta* justifies its name by an interruption of dark fruit half way up the stalk, the green above and below as if trying to resume its natural course. All the different varieties are bestirring themselves, the tall eagle fern, or brake as it is often called, with its three fold division, the more delicate ones in the hollow by the wayside, the baby curls just showing of the Christmas fern, above the bed of last year's evergreen fronds which have lasted all winter, prostrate on the ground, the great woolly heads of the Ostrich fern standing tall and vigorous as they push their sturdy way through the earth. What a fresh delicate green they add to the roadside and along the streams or beneath the trees as they uncurl and show their graceful leaves. How lovely, too, is the coloring of the distant woods, where the restless young leaves of the gray birches, the deep red keys of the swamp maples, the gray green of the poplars, the pink tips of the oak twigs are painted

in soft fresh tints against the pines and hemlocks. The elms in the village street, arching gracefully overhead, so feathery and delicate in the new foliage, or standing by twos and threes beside the farmhouse or in the meadow, warrant the praises lavished on their slender shape and flowing lines like an antique vase. Examine a single elm leaf and you will marvel at the exquisite workmanship, so finished and so perfect and yet no two precisely alike; and then remember what myriads of such leaves are unfolding on every tree, till you realize a tiny fraction of the beauty of this earth we live on. We pass it by, almost without a glance, unless it be specially brought to our notice; it requires study to appreciate how full are the pages of the book for those who will read even a little.

Again we find fresh charm, though it be only in a country lane. Now it is the wild strawberry blossom, nestled quite close on the brown earth, the dainty grace of the wild geranium, on its slender stalk, a delicate pink cup against the green, now the pale straw-colored bells of the *uvularia* or bellwort, drooping beneath the leaflets, or a long stalk with the separate little white flowers hanging in a row on the underside beneath the leaves. This is the Solomon seal, so called from the round impressions like a seal on the root stock.

There is a bed of shining green leaves at the foot of some tall pines, it is a trifle early yet but you will

find here and there a small spike of white flowerets with a delicate, sweet odor. It is the wild lily of the valley, or false Solomon seal, and later the whole bed will be full of the white clusters, set each between its two glossy green leaves.

Near it grows the deep pink polygala, with its fringed lip, reminding us of an orchid, though really no relation. It is one of the prettiest of the wood flowers and with its own leaves, slightly bronze on the fresh tips, and in company with the Solomon seal, ready to be gathered into a charming bunch of posies.

Under the trees, among the ferns, is a clump of anemones, with their delicately tinted cups swinging lightly on the threadlike stem. Their old name of wind-flower was wisely bestowed, for the bells seem ringing as the gentlest breeze passes over them. Close beside these last grows the still more graceful and delicate star anemone, the pointed white petals and slender golden stamens wide open to the light, a veritable star flower, and still again the trientalis with its leaves in whorls of three around the stem and at the top the white flower much like its neighbor, the star anemone.

Farther on, where a hidden little rill keeps the ferns and grasses fresh and green, you may find the fairy tiarella. A cone of misty white, looking like spray dashed up and caught into shape, it well justifies its

pretty name of foam flower, as it rises so lightly above the green leaves.

Here in the wood, among the ferns and uvularia, are the rarer yellow violets, shy and modest, while beneath the pines the ground again is purple with the wood-violet or birds'-foot violet, *Viola pedata*, quite different from its cousins. It is more like a pansy, with the yellow centre and purple or lavender petals, for it is found in all shades. Near it you are sure to see the low blueberry, the white waxen blossoms hanging to the stem, like a baby's little close hood, and here is a colony of pink lady's slipper, the two green leaves close to the ground and the stock bearing the striped pink purse, with the three very sharp sepals at its base. Few flowers are prettier or more noticeable than the lady's slipper, rising so straight and so daintily above the ground, with the quaint pink blossom drooping from the end of the stem.

Here we find some trilliums, the triple leaves overshadowing the three petalled flower, sometimes pure white, sometimes delicately painted with soft pink, or again the large purple trilliums, so-called, though the color more resembles mahogany or dark red leather.

Leaving the individual flowers for a moment, let me show you a delightful little nook we found today on a wood road. A brook crosses the path, and sitting on the broad stone of the causeway under the shade, we listened to the cheery babble of the water as it rippled

past, gurgling round the trunk and outstretching root of a tall elm in its current. Bright green mosses grow on the bank where the water rises and falls in its rhythmic flow, fresh ferns and grasses, bushes clothed anew in tender green leaves and overarching shrubs cover the bank, while strawberry blossoms, the low Solomon seal and fringed polygala give it color and brightness. The clear brown water runs swiftly by, over a bar of shining gravel, brought down perhaps by the stream itself and stayed by the tree barrier, flecks of sunlight fall on its surface and are broken into dimples as it hurries on. On the side where the long root, as large as a branch, extends to the shore, for the tree is in the middle of the stream, the water flows less easily and is combed into fine lines by a twig which caught and held it as it passed. Beyond, the brook winds in abrupt curves around some alders and birches, and on one side stretches the meadow rich with grass and clover tops. A simple picture, but one to bring rest and refreshment to many a tired soul, even if it could be seen only through other eyes.

Elsewhere is another peep into nature's picture book. A streamlet of clear bright water running silently through the field, almost hidden among the tall grass. As it comes out beneath a spreading maple, the ground is blue with long stemmed violets, set each among its own green leaves, and just beyond the water runs over a bank several feet high, falling

with a musical splash into a semi-circular natural basin lined with stones. It is clear as crystal, the surface broken with the constant fall into facets of light, the stones brown beneath the overhanging bank.

Driving through the country in this fair time of blossoms, you are surrounded on all sides by the armies of the apple tree; masses of white grouped irregularly on the hillside, a solitary pink sentinel keeping guard near the house, here a battalion in rank and file where you look far down the vistas of bloom between the straight rows, there a picturesque old veteran leaning over the stone wall; everywhere apple blossoms, apple blossoms, pink and white, all alike in the dainty coloring and yet each one different from its neighbor. The air is full of fragrance, but in another day the wind will scatter the petals, falling like a soft shower and spreading a snowy carpet beneath every tree. Playtime will soon be over, and the serious business of perfecting the fruit must be taken in hand.

When you can spare a look from the beauty of flowers, turn to the spring freshness of the leaves, soon to be the chief feature of the landscape. See the young birches, exquisitely green and delicate in their light tracery, the elms still feathery in outline, not yet rounded out to their matronly fullness, the oaks and beeches, always slow to prepare for summer, but with a hint of soft color, hazy and delicate, on the

tips of the branches, the swamp maples with the keys hanging so thick on the twigs that you can easily deceive yourself and think it autumn as you catch sight of the vivid red. All these stand on the slope of a hill against a forest of pines, the differing shades and tones of green relieved by the touches of pink and red, and a sense of lightness and delicacy in the foliage, to be lost when the leaves have attained their full size and luxuriance. The ashes and nut trees are still slower in their awakening, "delaying as the tender ash delays" as Tennyson sings, but by the stream stand the willows, no longer a gleam of yellow in the landscape, but thick and full and verdant. Across the bright green meadow, where the cowslips and houstonias show the moist ground, a farm house stands on the slope beyond, on either side is a tall elm tree with its graceful outward curve overshadowing the house and barn, behind are some Lombardy poplars. They always retain their foreign air, though many generations away from their sunny native land, and seem never to have been naturalized as American citizens. Red maples are in the dooryard, adding their share of color to the picture, and over the whole scene floods the spring sunshine beneath the blue arch of the sky, where some fleecy white clouds are moving slowly across. You may see picture after picture like this, the old gray farm houses supplying the human element which we need now and again among the

stretches of woodland, where only the trees keep one another company.

How full of loveliness is the spring time, the whole earth rejoicing anew in its own freshness and beauty, the spreading trees and branching shrubs and carpet of green, gay with the innumerable flowers. Yellow with dandelion and cowslip, white with bloodroot and strawberry blossom and anemone, blue with violet and hepatica, the purple hue of the rhodora or the deeper pink of the fairy polygala; all these crowd close together to welcome the new year of flowers as they record its calendar.

I have not sought for the rare, shy blossoms which might reward a patient search, I have only gathered those which are to be seen by every roadside or in meadow and wood. It is all to be had for the gathering, this great bunch of woodland beauty, sweet and fragrant with the freshness of growing things. Let us take it, and be grateful for the loveliness of every day, all about us in this blossom time of the year.

FROM THE HILLSIDE.

A little red house, stretching long and low by the roadside, looking as much an integral part of the landscape as the trees or stone wall. It is half way up the hill over which the road climbs, and as you look back from the field in front at the low windows they are nearly hidden by a gay border of flowers, a great mass of nasturtiums bright with yellow and red, above them zinnias in every conceivable shade from delicate pink to crimson. At the corner by the shed stand some tall sunflowers, looking almost tropical in their luxuriance. These light up the dull red wall of the little house and give it a cosy, homelike air.

Behind, as the land slopes downward, is a fair picture of pasture and meadow and wood. The pasture is open and somewhat bare, but the cows feed there, and the soft tinkle of their bells, in a minor key, comes up pleasantly to the open windows. The ground is covered with coarse grass, low bushes of white spirea and pink hardhack, the spreading mats of the ground cedar, while a few young pines and birches dot it here and there, and a colony of ferns grow along the stone wall. Where the slope descends more abruptly is an old orchard, a single half-grown pine standing in relief against the apple trees, and we

look down, past a strip of grass land, upon a fringe of alders and a few old elms, which mark the course of the brook, as it runs through the meadow. In midsummer it can hardly be said to run, it moves placidly along between the grassy banks, or where the alders bend half over to gaze at their own reflection, but in the spring it often floods the lowland, and has largely increased its borders where the soft earth has been washed away as the water rushes round a curve. The meadow beyond leads up to the road which branches here, leaving a green triangle with some tall elms shading the white farmhouse, where it stands out against the darker woods. These rise higher, some rounded fields of grass and grain, now turning yellow, peep out behind, more rounded heights are beyond and farther still are what look to us like mountain summits, though, if you are critical as to actual elevation, they are only hills. But it is all very complete and satisfying as we see it from our hillside; the near slope, the fringe of trees, the stretch of meadow beyond leading up to the farmhouse as it nestles beneath its sheltering elms, then the background of green, the pines soft and feathery, the thickly wooded heights and the rounded fields, and beyond and above the blue hills forming the sky line.

In the early morning sunlight, for the outlook is towards the north and the sun's first rays fall upon it, every tree and bush is clear and distinct, the hills

are green, and the whole looks close at hand. At noontide, on a clear day, the valley is bathed in sunshine, a quiver runs through the air close to the ground, and everything is motionless, a haze broods over the hills. Later, the afternoon shadows creep across, their long slender fingers reaching far out over the meadow, for the trees on the roadside shut out the sun as it sinks lower; longer and longer grow the shadows; the distant heights are a rich dark blue. But now the sun itself sinks behind the high hills, a soft primrose light brings out their outlines in sharp relief. Towards the west, on the further side of the field, is a thick wood, and out of it, overtopping the growth of hard wood, rise half a dozen tall white pines, their irregular branches silhouetted black against the golden radiance. Brighter grow the tints as the sun sets, now the sturdy young oak on the roadside, just behind the house, turns darker and darker in the fading light till the twigs and leaves stand like delicate tracery, black and clear and distinct on the yellow background. A moment longer and the light is quite gone, night settles over the landscape, and soon we catch a glimmer through the elms from our neighbor's window at the farmhouse below us, the stars peep out overhead and our daylight picture has vanished.

Another evening the mists rise slowly in the lowland, marking first the course of the brook as it winds in and out, now in the open, now beneath the trees,

or where the wild grapes and clematis have woven an almost impenetrable jungle. Soon the wreaths of mist gather in greater force, they reach higher between the trees, filling the valley till it looks like an inland sea with the tree tops for islands. Higher and higher come the soft trailing vapors, till the pasture is half submerged, the tide rises almost to the house and we feel the cool dampness. A dry time is coming, we say.

The prediction is verified and we have ten days of clear, cool, bright weather, each morning we awake to a world full of sunshine and blue sky. At length comes the much needed and welcome rain, intermittently at first in showers, then settling into a steady downpour, quiet and persistent, which soaks the dry earth, filling the springs and water-courses, giving new life to the grass and plants and trees. All night it falls, all day and through the night again. The meadow shows a tinge of green once more, as we see it through the falling rain, the distant hills are blotted out, while soft and indistinct rise the nearer slopes. A line of gray mist above the pines marks where the old timber was cut long ago and where now a growth of young wood takes its place. Beyond again, on somewhat higher ground, are more pines, for this is a famous tract of woodland.

It is sunset time, and as we look the dense clouds soften and separate, a rosy flush creeps up behind the hills; brighter grows the warm tint, the horizon glows.

Now some scattered clouds far to the northeast have caught the color and float, pink and fleecy, on the watery background. We hopefully prophesy a fine day tomorrow and in truth we are not disappointed. In the night the miracle has been wrought, the sky and air are swept clear of clouds, and we awake to find the heavens a brilliant sapphire, the air fresh and cool and invigorating, and the green earth rejoicing in the sunshine. Like a lover's quarrel, justified by the "making up", we are glad of the wet dull days, for they are ended in this bright, sunny morning.

BY THE ROADSIDE.

The road leading down hill from the little red house is first bordered on one side by luxuriant masses of wild grape vine, which run riot over some small trees, quite indistinguishable beneath the profusion of leaves and tendrils. Opposite, at our own corner, is a fine, sturdy, young red oak in full leaf; these, the oak and the vine, are our gate posts at the entrance of the leafy avenue. More oaks, maples and hickories, a couple of white birches and their gray cousins shade the road except in early morning; a brave tangle of saplings, ferns, milkweed, daisies and goldenrod line the roadside, and over it all trails the clematis, soon to be covered with starry white blossoms. Farther on, the way is edged with high bushes of elder blow,

in country parlance, and of viburnum, now both white with the broad clusters of bloom and later to be gay with red and blue berries, the wild grape clambers over the smaller bushes, sometimes almost hiding them with its trailing branches, the spirea, the ferns, and the dull pink heads of the Joe Pye weed stand close together. A little later in the month we find the button bush in the meadow by a little streamlet, with the round prickly balls of white flowerets to mark it. One would hardly suspect the last of being own cousin to the modest partridge vine, or to the dainty spring houstonia, but plant relationships are often a surprise. We catch a glimpse of the old orchard as we pass, looking beneath the spreading branches to where the cows have made an entrance, attracted by the scent of the early apples just beginning to dream of ripening.

Here we look over a pair of bars into a field of oats, waving in the soft breeze, and beyond is the wood with the tall pines behind which we see the sunset from our own windows. Now we have a meadow picture on either hand, towards the east it is bounded by irregular clumps of trees breaking into the sea of grass like the indentations of the shore, and rising from it is a high hill, somewhat bare of woods, but with low bright green patches which we know mean blueberries.

In the broad western intervalle it is bright sunshine, here and there a single elm rises gracefully against the

sky, we trace the course of the brook, fringed with alders and willows. In the distance are a couple of farmhouses on the high road, really high in comparison with the intervale, the red barn of one and the white porch of the other giving a bit of brightness amid the green. It is a demure, quiet little brook, as I have said, but for all that we may find some pictures worth remembering. Where the stone wall divides the possessions of the two neighbors, stands an old willow, its roots in the water, and we look beneath an outstretched branch across the waving grass to the houses beyond. Picking our way carefully across the half dry bed, and scrambling along the bank, we may peep through the trees, where this same old willow and a companion across the stream nearly meet overhead, at the water running gently over the pebbles, and see the farmhouse again, half hidden by the leaves. A little further down is a deeper pool, shut in by low alders and a maple tree and edged by tall grasses. It is green and fresh and cool, in contrast to the brilliant sunshine in the open meadow.

Following up the brook beyond the willows on a day when its waters are full after heavy rains, we meet it running swiftly through the meadow, as it comes down over some rocks where the trees crowd closely to the brink and the channel narrows. Stay here on the terraced bank, and listen to the many voices in the brook cantata; quick, high little notes,

incessantly repeated, a gentle accompaniment in a lower key, a musical ripple at the shelving bank, while beneath it all sounds a deep organ tone, less frequent but rich and full as you catch its note, and harmonizing with the rest. The rocky bed here forms a succession of diminutive cascades, white with bubbles as the stream hurries past. A single cardinal flower is growing in a shallow spot in the midst of the current, swaying gently with the motion, like a slender shaft of flame against the grasses on the edge of the stream.

Let us go back to the road we have deserted for this stroll across the intervalle, stopping on our way to look up at the high pines and birches on the sand bank at one side, rising abruptly out of the meadow. They form an uneven line against the sky, while their lower ranks descend to the meadow, and later we shall see what treasures of beauty lie hid on the back of this ridge.

Where the brook crosses the road is a wooden bridge with a weatherbeaten rail, where sometimes you may see a fisherman leaning over, rod in hand, for there are trout to be caught here if one be wise and wary and possessed of much patience. The water in this spot is at its deepest and broadest, not much at best you say, but see where the spring freshets have undermined the soft earth till a great curve has been cut out of the bank, for the brook, slow and placid as it now looks, may become a torrent when the melting

snows and spring rains have swollen its head waters and sent them rushing through the valley.

ON THE SAND BANK.

Before we follow the stream further, let us take a peep at the sand bank so-called. A path leads to it just beyond the bridge, but we will go past the white farmhouse with the great elms before it, turning where the road lies under the cool shadows of the trees. White birches brighten the hillside, for this is the other side of the ridge, and opposite is a thick pine wood, the trunks like long rows of columns. All the wayside is overgrown with ferns and brambles, branches droop over the stone wall, and at the edge of the pines are ferns again. Not fairly in the wood, for pine needles are not good for a luxuriant undergrowth, leaf mould is better for that. Here we may find an easy path through the brushwood to the top of the ridge, which is broader and more level than it appears from below. I want you to sit here with me on the ground and drink in the sweetness of the warm pine needles, spicy and resinous. Look out at the portal framed by two tall pines, with the feathery twigs interlacing above, upon the wide field, smooth and even as a floor. The tall grass waves in the southwest wind, with here and there a bunch of yellow ox-eyed daisies, the great soft white clouds pass over, one by one, and

make ever changing shadows on the green hills beyond, where the white spire of the village church just shows above the trees. Quickly the shadows move, now a long line athwart the hillside, now a shifting of sunlight and shade, now a great spot of darker green when the sun is hidden for a few moments. The wind brings up the clouds from below the horizon, then sweeps them all away, and the sun shines forth with renewed strength out of the deep blue sky. There is a pause, an expectant stillness, while the warm breath of the pines fills the air, again comes a gust of wind and the trees on the edge of the field sway and bend beneath it, the air is cool on your cheek. You sit long, watching the lights and shadows chase one another across the distant hills, like the quick change of expression on a human face.

On the broad mowing, the muster-field as it is sometimes called, tradition asserts that the county militia were formerly drilled, it being the largest piece of level ground in the neighborhood. At one side of it runs the highway to the village, emerging from the shadows of the wood, and on the other side the ground drops steeply to the intervale below. Here the trees are thickly set on the side hill, rank above rank, and through the trunks we may catch glimpses of the smooth meadow and the farmhouses on the road beyond. Pines are in the minority here, all the other forest trees are represented, oaks, beeches,

maples, chestnuts, hickories, gray and black birches, but especially admirable and abundant are the white birches. A long irregular row of them stands along the border of the open field, at the top of the hanging wood, and their white trunks shine against the tree tops far below. They grow in families, two or three together, one group of five tall stems rising fair and graceful among their sisters. A low fringe of young pine saplings has been cut away so that the beauty of the birches may show more clearly. Examine the bark, the lower part of the trunk somewhat roughened, and showing the dark scars which come with increasing years, higher up it is smoother and more even, some pale green lichens set off its fairness. See the ruffled edge of the lichen, how delicately it grows, and how well the soft shade harmonizes with the white bark. The younger trees are smooth and white and rounded like the tender skin on fair young flesh, and you wonder that the winds and storms of winter have not roughened and marred the surface.

It is a somewhat curious formation of the land here. The broad level field comes to an end at the edge of the hanging wood, a furrow actually marks the division where the trees begin and the grass stops. The line of birches, of which I have just spoken, extends far along the edge and at the end farthest from the wood is a round space beneath some pines, projecting like a platform over the steep declivity. On the

extreme end of this natural stage is a deep dry gully now clothed with trees and bushes and woodbine, but formerly the channel of a brook, perhaps, when the field was a lake, for the action of water or glaciers seems to be a possible solution. Pine needles have fallen from above, and sitting on the soft sweet mat we look through the trees below as they march down hill, and see between the branches the strip of interval land where the brook runs. A couple or more of especially tall straight pines challenge our notice; they would show their height more plainly if they stood on the level and so were fairly matched against their neighbors. I never before fully understood the meaning of a "hanging wood"; it is beautiful as you look along the hillside and see the different layers of light and shade, the trunk of one tree set off against the top of another, while the sunlight filters through the leaves, falling on the brown earth, and on the stems of our favorite white birches. A breeze seems always stirring on this high platform, and we may sit on the edge of the bank, looking up at the green against the sky, or through the trees at the pastoral meadow below, with the soft cool air about us, and the dark recesses of the pine wood to rest our eyes, if they grow dazzled by the sunlight on the field and distant hills.

Turn now and look into the wood at whose entrance you have been sitting. It is like a great minster, the

nave spread before you, thickly carpeted with the fallen needles, the trunks of the pine trees rise straight and sombre, you may look far down the vista. On either side are the aisles with lighter columns of white birches, gleaming through the pines, more slender and delicate than the others, some in cloistered groups, some like single shafts of white marble. Far beyond they surround and terminate the chancel of pines like a Lady Chapel, with its graceful pillars springing up to the high vaulting of blue sky. One column of the nave is in striking contrast to the dark straight lines, a cluster of four white birch stems all springing from a common root, and rising into the upper air. It is like some fragment from a Greek temple, preserved for its beauty of line and curve, and placed in a cathedral with no thought or dread of its pagan origin, only admiration for its loveliness, and a desire to see its glory in a holy place. The white stems curve slightly outward, and sway slowly in the wind, the green leaves above where the sun touches them are a vivid emerald, the tracery, as you look up from below, is like a most delicately carved capital. Flecks of sunlight fall on the brown floor like a mosaic, the rays shine on the pine branches overhead till every needle is alive with light, the twigs glisten as they move to and fro. Only a wood of pines and birches, but how much beauty stored therein for the one who looks on. For music there is the murmur like the sea in the pines, the

rustle of green leaves, the swish of the tall grass in the field as the wind passes over it, and now and then the note of a bird. It is high noon just now, and the dwellers in the wood are silent, but come at early morning, or when the twilight begins to fall, and you may hear the feathered choir.

Presently we go back through the great portal, down the dim aisles of the forest minster, but the way contracts among the trees and bushes, the likeness is lost, it is only a wood path leading out on the road by the bridge. The cathedral is hidden like a beautiful secret, you must go through the ways of every day to find it, but in your heart you know it is there waiting.

BENEATH THE BIRCHES.

Through the pines opposite the hanging wood on the road we discovered one day a charming spot. A high mound clothed with trees on the sides, steep at one end and sloping gradually at the other, is covered with white birches. They stand singly, by twos, or in clusters, the smooth fair stems so graceful and silvery against the sky, or the other trees, for the birches are not the only possessors of the mound. We wonder if it is possible that this is a moraine left by the glaciers of the New England Ice age, but it needs a geologist to settle the question, albeit we choose to decide in the affirmative and call it our birch moraine.

Look at this group of seven shapely trunks all rising together and evidently closely connected, like seven fairy princesses, enchanted till the royal brothers shall come, each to claim his bride. Or like fair nymphs or dryads, imprisoned in the shining bark, and ready to grant the wish of him who spares their dwelling place.

The sides of the hillock can boast various of the other forest trees as well as the birches, but the latter are at home on the level summit, narrow and long. Their white stems are relieved against the darker evergreens of the slope and of the lower wood beyond, and lying on the soft grass beneath them, you look far up to the waving branches as they move lightly in the wind, and see the bright green leaves dancing on their tops. Less easily fluttered than the gray birches, they yet have a graceful swing and motion in the upper currents of air. On one side are the vistas of dark pine, on the other a wilderness of young fresh growth where the older forest has been cut, while beneath the slender stems is a luxuriant bed of ferns, tall and full, like a tropical forest. From the gradual slope of the moraine at our end we look through the branches to a meadow beyond and see the haymakers at work. This is a cool spot on a hot summer morning, for it catches the breeze which is lost among the closer tree trunks. Fifty years ago it was only a sand bank and in winter good coasting was to be had over the steep

sides. Now it is well shaded and has the added charm of remoteness, hidden amid the pine wood, and you come upon it with a fresh, keen sense of discovery at each visit.

As we turn back to the road again, we must notice the stem of that birch encircled by a small hemlock on the bank behind it, each setting forth the beauty of the other. The fairness of the white bark is enhanced by the dark rich feathery sprays, the same combination of color, green and white, which may be seen elsewhere in a fallen birch trunk overgrown with emerald moss.

An old stone wall borders the foot of the slope where stands the hanging wood. What a mosaic it makes! covered with moss and lichens; here is rich dark velvet moss, and beside it palest gray lichens, crisp and flaky, there a bronze background with tiny scarlet cups against it. On a stone half hidden by its neighbor is the softest yellow, some acorns lying near by. Every shade of gray, yellow, green and brown may be found on the wall, clothed in its old age with marvellous beauty of color and texture. Come down here on a wet day and see how the moisture enriches and deepens the coloring, not only of these tiny plants, but of the tree trunks also. The pines are almost black while the lichens on the bark stand out in bright green. At the foot of that hemlock is a great splash of light gray against the dark root, on the glistening

white of the birch the soft green moss assumes a more vivid tint. All are brighter for their bath, and the tree trunks add their contribution to the full box of colors, laid on by Nature's skilful hand. Yonder, where the pine needles have fallen thickest, the earth is a warm red brown like polished mahogany, against which each little green plant which has pushed its way through the surface is in full relief.

IN THE PINE WOOD.

Let us turn in, past the house and the cellar of the great barn which once stood here, burned some years ago and now filled with green. Going across the grass we find a path leading into the wood, through ferns and bushes, and over a tiny streamlet. The ground is thickly covered with many kinds of ferns, with bunch berries just turning red, wintergreen, checkerberry, the running vines of partridge berry and the glossy round leaves of gold thread making a luxuriant carpet of green. We follow a half invisible trail, and in a minute the undergrowth is left behind, the brown needles take its place, and we are in a dense forest of pines. On all sides they stretch, dark and mysterious, no longer a minster nave, but like a vast cathedral with spreading aisles, opening into fresh vistas between straight trunks as we advance. Here and there are open spaces where the sun pours down

its rays and the ground is soft with rich moss, now a vivid emerald green made up of miniature fir trees, so they seem, now a pearly gray, dry and crisp beneath our feet. A most comfortable bed to rest on and we are tempted to sink down on its yielding, elastic cushion, and gaze up through the tree tops into the deep blue above. Traces are left of old wood roads down which we may see far away between the trunks of the pines, or look out at a piece of clearing beyond, where a young plantation of birches or other saplings contrast their fresh green leaves with the darker shadows within. Up and down we wander, drinking in the warm aromatic breath of the evergreens, seeing the patches of sunlight on the earth brown with the dry needles, noticing where a little colony of pyrola or wintergreen has forced its way through the covering, or where the twin leaves of the lady's slipper mark the beauty which Spring had to offer. Here on the edge of the hill, the wood ceases; a new growth of green trees shows where the heavy timber was cut down and we may feel the cool breeze and see across the valley the weather-stained buildings of a neighboring farmstead.

Wandering still further on, we come to a strip of low wet thicket, where a little brook trickles through the moss and ferns, and crossing it on two small logs, are in another pine wood. It all sounds the same, but with each step the outlook varies, the trees hold

different relations to one another, the long aisles change their direction and give new chances for sunlight or shade. An occasional birch or oak makes a contrast to the lines of dark trunks, its bright green standing out against the gray furrowed bark; not white birches, though, for strange to say, these latter, so numerous in our former hunting grounds, are entirely absent from this special tract! So closely do the pines grow that the lower branches have all died for want of air and sunshine, only above do we see the feathery plumes. In the race for light and air each individual has striven to outstrip its neighbors, and the stems rise straight as an arrow for nearly a hundred feet. Where the dead lower limbs are knocked off by the hand of the forester, the improvement is marked, the breeze can play more freely, one can see a longer distance through the wood.

BY THE BROOK.

Across the road from the pine wood is a field called Flora's pasture, from the clever little black pony, dear to the hearts of the children a generation ago. She could take down the bars and let herself out to go up to the house, where often her mischief was rewarded with a lump of sugar. Do you see beyond the bushes a tall group of pines and other trees? They follow the brook in its winding course and we will go also,

led by the soft murmur of the water. In older times a dam was built here that the meadow might be flooded and made more fertile, but unfortunately sand was brought down instead of a richer deposit, and so the project was abandoned and the old dam has fallen into ruin. It makes a picturesque spot for us now. Trees clothe both sides of the brook, birches shining white through the leaves, oaks, maples, a beech or two, a young elm just on the brink, and highest of all are some stately pines, rising straight and tall. Their green crowns are almost out of sight, so far above our heads, and the great trunks witness to their long life. There are many more pine trees in the forest yonder, but these special ones are the finest in the country round, and are treasured accordingly. The stream winds its way from the meadow, past the low alders, there is a sinuous curve to be made before it gains the cool shelter. A tiny islet has been cut from the shore and stands like a boat with two tall maples for mast and a projecting nut tree as prow. The water glides slowly by, the sunlight filters through the trees and makes brown gleams on the gravelly bottom. On the small island is a thick tangle of wild grape and clematis, stalks of meadow-rue with the delicate foliage, tall grasses and low laurel, with its shining green leaves. A little farther down, the brook has cut a wide graceful curve out of the yielding shore, for the old dam once stopped the way and the water

stood deeper. Here the long drooping sprays of Royal fern, green and luxuriant, fall over the low bank, the roots of an old maple stretch down to the water, bushes of mountain laurel fill in the background and all sorts of vines and plants cover the edge. Waving to and fro in the still pool are the long streamers of some green water weed, catching the sunlight as they sway beneath the dark surface. Gray rocks, with here and there a patch of rich moss, spread more than half way across from bank to bank, the stream hastens as it nears them and slips between the stones with a merry little ripple, running over a smooth rounded log. On our side is the other foundation of the old dam, some larger boulders over which clammers the ubiquitous grapevine, even reaching up to the slender branches of a young white birch, which has found foothold in a crevice, while the tall graceful fronds of another *Osmunda* wave beside it. From our seat here on the rocks, we can see the whole sweep of the fern-lined basin, and looking higher through the tree tops we catch a glimpse of blue sky. Only at high noon does the sun visit this woodland recess, and even then not all the dark water is illumined at once, so closely do the watchful trees stand about it, as if to guard its treasure of loveliness. Very beguiling we find it here, listening to the murmur of the water as it passes, now louder, now softer, sometimes lingering on its way, and again coming

hastily, and with apparently increased volume. If you hearken closely to the song of the brook, you catch the rhythmical rise and fall, one more of the pulsations which exist within us and around us, a sign of the tide of life, flowing through the whole creation. It is a dreamy, quiet spot, your thoughts wander far afield with no definite purpose, but a sense of rest and refreshment comes with the stillness, broken only by the ripple of water, by the deeper murmur in the pine boughs or the rustle of leaves. The sunlight flickers through the twigs and dances on the little waves as they break on the stones or eddy round a fallen branch, the ferns look down at their own image in the quiet pool, the green and black dragonflies hover over the surface or enjoy the warm sunshine as they pause for an instant on a stone. All is silent save the leaves and the brook.

Further along the course of the brook is a shady resting place under some spreading hemlocks, where it is always cool and dark. Here we have another point of view, swift little rapids where the water breaks and dimples over the stony bed, then running fast and strong by a sand bar, with a great boulder just above it keeping back the trees which crowd closely on the other shore. A maple overhangs the bank by the hemlocks, the leaves catch the reflection of the sun on the water and are dappled with light and shade.

Late one afternoon, after rambling through the

woods and meadow, we went down to the pool by the old dam for a last visit. The sun was low, and the rays slanted through the trees, lighting the water with wonderful reflections. The air was still, not a breath stirred the leaves, every branch and twig high above, the ferns on the bank, even the brown earth by the roots, were all mirrored faithfully in the basin. Gleams of golden sunlight, tinged with brown as they shot through the water upon the shining gravel, golden brown beneath the surface, here a brilliant green reflected from the ferns, a softer shade from the maples, darker hues from the pine boughs far aloft. Each distinct from its neighbor, and yet all shading together into a rich harmony of color, green and brown and gold. Here and there a quiver in the water as a trout darted past or flashed up to the surface. It was a scene full of beauty, quiet and peaceful, not a sound to break the stillness, save only the rippling water just beyond. The sunlight grew fainter, the rays slanted lower, a shadow fell on the pool, and so in the coming twilight we left it to rest, going home across the silent fields.

THE ILLUMINATION.

When the spring gladdens the earth anew, with her lavish bestowal of tender green and fair blossoming woodland, coming so close upon the snows and cold winds of her forerunner, we murmur to ourselves that nothing can ever be so welcome as this fresh young life. But as the days pass and we pass with them through the fuller bloom, the ripe luxuriance and fierce heat of summer, bringing flowers and fruits alike to richest perfection, and come once more to the time of autumn, then we find an especial charm in the "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness." The joy of anticipation is no longer keen, a sense of completion, of fulfilment takes its place, the story is well nigh told. And yet some pages are still to be turned, there still lingers a vision of wonderful beauty in light and color, every day things are transfigured with almost unearthly loveliness, and this practical work-a-day world seems once more some faery place. There still remains the Indian Summer, that second youth which comes to us here in our cold bleak New England, grown old before her time, in the hard struggle with the realities of life. It is one of the compensations of our northern land, that the warmth and beauty and softness of the earlier days may come back to us with redoubled charm, and

yet we need not lose the lessons taught by stern teachers, by cold winds and lessening sunlight. Let us take the respite and read the parable of the gracious withdrawal of autumn and the readiness to make way for the bare fields and the sleep of the earth, while we learn to harvest its joys and keep them safe within.

The maples which all summer have been a mass of shade by the road-side, each one a populous city wherein dwelt the birds and squirrels and myriads of tiny busy creatures, now show a bit of the sky through the branches. The leaves begin to fall, but what a blaze of red is revealed as the many still remaining shine through the boughs of the companion tree, less quick to respond to the enchanter's wand. Shift your position a hand's breadth as you look across the grass and you have at each turn a different picture, wherein the splendor of color glows through the green. It is like a hero's funeral pyre, the flames rising high to heaven and proclaiming to the world what a glorious thing may be made of the close of life.

Every little shrub and vine, the sumach by the wayside, the scarlet berries on the black alder, the woodbine by the brook, the tangle of low blackberry vines in the pasture, the blueberry bushes on the hill, even the small meadow plants in the moist places, are on fire with emulation of their grander neighbors. The poison ivy seeks to make us forget its evil name,

glistening brightly in vivid scarlet and burnished as if by an artist's brush, the veins showing strongly through the rich shading. It seems hard that anything so beautiful should forbid the gathering, as the leaves trail over a stone wall, or round a tree trunk or about an old, weather-beaten stump. It is the carnival of leaves, before the lenten season of dry bare branches. Or rather the woods are like an illuminated missal wrought slowly and with infinite pains by loving hands, and making a wondrous picture of color and beauty for him who seeks to read the eternal truths upon which the whole is inscribed.

The illumination of the woods — it is no new thing and we may see it each year as the seasons come round and yet possibly we may find a variation on the old theme.

For myself, I want to look at the autumn glory as I find it in the familiar places, as it shows from the hillside where I last saw the green of summer.

From the windows of the little red house, we find a wider outlook, for the leaves have fallen sufficiently to show the distant landscape more plainly. Far down the hill some white stems shine out and we recognize still another of the birches so plentiful about us, yet which was hidden earlier in the wealth of green. The farmhouse stands out more distinctly across the meadow, for an intervening maple and the great elm are both bare. The farther hills glow softly in tender

purples and dull reds, we cannot distinguish the individual trees, the colors melt into one another as the autumn haze broods over the scene, blending it all into harmony.

The sun in its setting no longer lights up the clear outlines of the pine trees across the way, it is far to the south now and drops behind the tree tops without distinguishing them. Where earlier was the leafy thicket of the wild grape vine by our door are now only brown dry twisted stems, closely entwined about the smaller trees which formed a support for the luxuriance and riot of the earlier growth. The road down the hill is strewn with fallen leaves, we smell their rich nutty odor, they rustle as we tread them under foot. The vines and ferns by the wayside are shaded into rich browns, the oat field is shorn and yellow.

All this is the quiet, the sombre side of the picture, the dull coloring and the fallen leaves emphasize the passing of summer, although on the meadow the grass is still full and green. But as we reach the turn of the road and come in sight of the bridge, there is the glory of color, the illumination of the page in Nature's book. Three tall maples which have been full of rich green all summer, scarcely distinguishable one from the other, now are individualized. A week ago one was aglow with crimson fires, shining through the green of its neighbors, spreading below them and beyond them.

Here the glorious tints were seen between two boughs of the next tree, still in its summer leafage, there one drooping branch was alight, and stretched below its neighbor like a tongue of flame. It seemed then that nothing could equal the beauty of contrast, that the best had come. Now this tree is bare, only the twigs remain to show the framework. But what a transfiguring glory has been bestowed upon the others. Scarlet, crimson, red, which shall we call the splendor? The trees are ablaze with brilliant light. As we look up at the branches against the deep cloudless blue, the beauty almost pains us, it is so wonderful, we are dazzled by the effulgence. We gaze and gaze, as if to stamp it all on our memory, striving to store it up as an enchantment wherewith to banish the dulness and cold of the coming days when earth has only her browns and grays to offer. Truly this leaf of the missal is an illuminated one, an artist's faithful hand has been at work, enhancing the words of the text by the hues of scroll and letter. Again and again we turn and look back at the flame of color, marvelling thereat and rejoicing in the radiance which seems to shine forth as if from a living fire within.

But not to all the great family of maples is it given to brighten the wayside in such vividness. Some are a suggestion of the days of King Midas, who, so declares Hawthorne, when gifted with the Golden Touch, turned the trees to gold. Truly the legend seems

possible when we see the full rich foliage in its yellow luxuriance. Pale at first, the golden color deepens and spreads, the edges of the leaves warm and darken as the first frosty night ripens them and in the sunlight the tree is like a mass of the precious metal, cunningly wrought. The elms are a duller hue, but soft and radiant as they stand against the blue. Soon their leaves are blown by the wind and fall, dry and withered to the ground beneath. The boughs once more reveal the grace of outline, the delicacy of the slender twigs is seen, which gives our New England elm such a foremost place in the beauty of a winter scene. The hickories and chestnuts too, are among the yellows in the picture, shading into brown as the days go on, while the prickly burs open on the ground below and the squirrels go a-harvesting.

The oaks — what shall I say of them? Less brilliant than the maples, more subdued in tone, they yet can bear the comparison and lose no jot of admiration, as we look at them on the hillside near the bridge. Come when the morning light is full upon them, revealing the endless variety of shading. One is a deep rich wine color like a flask of some precious vintage, one is dark purple or perhaps the mellow shade of a ripe plum when the sunlight brings out the red beneath the skin. Another is russet, yellow and brown enamelled together. Here a branch of brighter red stands out against a background of green, there a

tree is all golden bronze, while the next is deep red again. Over them all lies the sunlight, each leaf shining as if newly burnished and reflecting the colors differently as it hangs at a different angle from its neighbor. There is not the glow of hidden fires, not the sense of self-created flame which the red maple gives, the oaks are more consciously adorned for their festal day, they have decked themselves in all the tints which the palette of autumn could boast. The richness of the woods is due to them, they are like stately matrons clad in sumptuous velvets and glistening silks, yet not forgetting that the gay bright colors of youth are no longer appropriate to their maturer beauty.

Less conspicuous than either are the beeches, not so abundant in these woods but yet sufficient in numbers to claim a place in the pageant. Many are still green as in summer, but others have turned to a soft yet bright yellow, and others still are an inimitable shade of true brown, as it always seems to me, with no tinge of red to sharpen its delicacy. Look at the three colors together, the tender green, still almost spring-like, the delicate yellow brightening the dark places beneath the trees, the soft dainty brown, setting off the other two. The veining of the leaves is regular and marked, the little ribs are clearly defined whether the leaf be green or brown. How well the colors are harmonized in Nature's paint box, there is never a discord.

The birches have already lost most of their leaves, the few which are left on the gray birches are a pale yellow against the sky, the white stems of their cousins gleam more brightly than ever through the barer woods. That beauty they never lose, winter or summer, only the crown of green has vanished and the slender outlines are more noticeable. See what a rich carpet is spread by the roadside and under the trees, all the various leaves heaped together and inviting you to play at being a child again and enjoy the delectable crackle and rustle as you push through them.

Now the pines and hemlocks are coming to the front. In summer they are only the background, they rest the eye and give the welcome shade, but their value is negative, not positive. Today, however, the dark green is an important factor in the picture, the eye, wearied by excess of color, or depressed by the neutral tints, seeks the evergreens as a refreshment, they are the fitting complement to the reds and browns. Soon the leaves of the other trees will all be gone, the bare branches will rear themselves against the over-arching sky, the snow will drift in among the trunks, and lie in masses along the stone walls. Then the pine woods will be in their glory, the steadfast green will be recognized as indispensable to the winter landscape. Only a practised eye can tell at a glance which is maple or birch, beech or oak or chestnut, but every one knows the tall pine with the feathery branches,

now seen against the light in delicate tracery, now drooping beneath a soft blanket of snow.

The brook reflects more of the heavens in its tranquil waters, for the leaves which overshadowed it have floated gently down and rest in the quiet pools where the current runs slowly, almost imperceptibly. They drift along, scarcely seeming to move, but beneath the surface the stream goes on its course, the leaves glide more quickly, one by one they reach the rapids, are drawn in and presently are hurrying over the stones or are caught in an eddy and left behind, forgotten by those which follow. It is almost impossible not to speak in parables, we cannot avoid reading a lesson into the new glory which comes with the closing of the year's history, into the fall of the leaf, and the enduring of the lesser beauty in the evergreen. The world of nature is full of parallels, they are not logical, only suggestive.

On a shady road leading to the hills are some bits of loveliness which I would gladly paint, if words had form and color. The bank falls off steeply on one side and in the hollow below are many beech trees, the leaves all yellow and lighting up the place as if the sun himself were hidden there. Even though it is late afternoon and the light is dimmed, the road is illumined by the golden radiance, it is hard to believe the sunlight is not on the leaves.

On the other side, with true artistic effect, the bank

risers instead of falling and from the road below we look up to a wood of hemlocks, dark and pointed as they stand high above us. Set amongst them here and there is a tall birch, a maple, a nut tree, glimmering like veritable jewels of fine gold against the green. No specimen of the art of the mediaeval gold-worker is so delicate and lovely as the crown of yellow leaves, in full relief against the sombre hemlocks and shining more brightly for the contrast. The sun has sunk behind the horizon but the afterglow paints the sky soft pink and blue, the leaves on the hillside are lighted up still more richly, we hold our breath and marvel at the beauty as it lingers and lingers. At last the primrose tints fade in the west, the darkness comes apace and we drive through the woods, dim and mysterious, till the moon rises.

The harvest moon is now in her glory, the great sphere mounts slowly through the clear sky, and when it rides high, and "heaven is overflowed" we walk up through the woods to the ridge. A flood of light is over the level field, brighter than day it almost seems, the birches are white on the edge of the bank, the pines are black in contrast with the brilliant moonlight. Stand under them and look up and out at the brightness; through the forest minster which we remember, we see the gleam of the birch columns, in the far aisles where it is more open the light penetrates and falls on the ground as on a mosaic pavement. As we walk

through the length of the wood, the likeness to a cathedral increases, we feel again that it is a sacred place, not built by human hands.

And so we leave the autumn beauty, touched into higher things by the light shed upon it. The glow of color, the richness of gold are all subordinate to the white light poured over the world. The white light which is the full chord of harmony, gathering into itself all lesser tones and resolving them into one perfect note, where passion and striving die away, and are succeeded, not by coldness, but by completeness.

THE CALL OF THE WHITE BIRCHES.

On all sides comes the call; from the shady road where the tall trunks lean far out of the hillside, the leafy tips making a shimmer of light green athwart the sky; from the mound in the pine wood where the white stems rise like the pillars of a temple. In the dim aisles of the forest minster the slender shafts gleam through the darker columns of nave and choir; on the edge of the field they stand, white and fair, a suggestion of the cloistered walk of some old cathedral. The leaves dance softly in the sunshine as it falls on the fresh young crown of green, its summer glory, worn with innocent vanity, and yet with a gracious dignity as befits the maiden among the forest trees. Surely the birch may well be called the "white lady", as she and her myriad sisters shine out of the depths of the wood.

By many voices of the older time they call. By sunny days in the fair land of Greece, when nymphs were yet to be seen of men as they wended their way up the vine-clad slopes, or wandered far among the woodland pathways where the trailing ivy with its berries garlanded the tree trunks, or as they loitered in the meadow to gather anemones and daffodils with Persephone.

To him who looked with eagerness, yet reverencing the gods, a shadowy form might come, slipping between the birch stems, fair and slender and white as themselves, the golden hair shedding a glory around as it were the sunlight on the leaves. Like the goddess of whom Endymion dreamed, she might steal down at twilight to a mortal lover, filling his eyes with beauty and his soul with rapture, and linger by his side while the shadows gathered and the moonbeams slanted through the wood, then flitting away with a regretful backward glance.

Perhaps by some moss-bordered pool where the shade lay deepest, where only at noonday did the sun peep through the leaves and lighten the dim reflections, the hunter might come unaware on Diana and her nymphs, as they sought the cool, refreshing water after the long chase. But as he caught one glimpse of the smooth, rounded limbs, glancing through the leaves or shining beneath the rippling surface, lo! they were gone. His presumption brought its own punishment. Only the white birches rose above the ferns and vines, they leaned over the basin's edge, they stood in groups among the trees. Here and there he could almost see the transformation, the fair white stem was soft and spotless as the rounded arm of an immortal maiden. As he listened, he might fancy he heard mocking laughter and a soft whisper, as of making merry at the clumsy mortal who so soon be-

trayed his presence. No, it was only the music of the stream rippling over the stones, it was but the murmur of the leaves as they rustled together.

The wild, shy creatures of the wood, the birds, the dragon-flies by the brook, what may they see of the ancient presences, ancient, yet dowered with eternal youth, telling of the days when earth was young and life was full and abundant in tree and flower, as in all else we call animate. How do we know what visitants may still linger in the secret nooks of the woodland, what gratitude may thrill the tree whose beauty is guarded as a treasure, on whose leaves the sun is permitted to shine, through whose branches the breeze may play. As it sways in the soft air, it seems to breathe the thanks that are not audible to our dull ears, through the screen of leaves the white bark gleams like a smile of grateful recognition, the whole tree calls a greeting to its human friend.

In memory then of the white presences upon the slopes of Olympus, in all the places sacred to the immortal gods, let the birch trees be loved and cherished, let the fair bark stand untouched of the sharp knife, let the sister groups rise in grace and freedom, let the leafy chaplet still catch the sunbeam. May nought approach to mar their beauty, no lesser trees press rudely about their maiden daintiness, let all reverence be paid to them as fit dwelling place for gentle spirits. So shall the call of the white birches find response.

A ROADSIDE CHRONICLE.

Far off, among the western hills of New England, lies a little village, wherein I have pitched my tent for a time. It is a restful, quiet spot, and as I sit in my doorway of a morning or an afternoon, I watch the passers-by. Some of them hurry on with scarcely a pause, others tarry for a while and even sojourn with me, but all stop long enough to toss me a glance and a word, to let me look and listen as they go their way. It is this never-ending change and succession which I want to record as I sit at the roadside, or venture farther afield. For it is well, occasionally, to see new places, to wander through fresh woods and pastures, and then come home content.

I shall set down my sight seeing and my visitors, sometimes while I actually look on, sometimes in a happy memory of what has been seen; but whether the tense be past or present, it will be simply a wayside chronicle, an endeavor to reproduce the daily beauty which has filled my soul with delight, in these summer days.

Close by the yellow road which stretches far away southward through towns and villages, running under the shadow of the trees and along high, open ridges, journeying by many a brook and sunny meadow,

stands a long irregular old house. Many years have gone by since the farmhouse was built here on the slope of the hill, which rises above it, and drops below it, laden on one side by the orchard. Tall spruces stand sentinel on the terrace which supports the house, the wind sighing through their branches, below lies the broad meadow in all its varied shades of green, the wooded hills rise beyond. Opposite the door, across the road, it is steep and high and hard to climb, clothed with great pines and oaks, and below these the laurel bushes make the rocky pasture a glory in their own day, and birds sing early and late where the wood is cool and dark and quiet.

This is the setting for the old house which is always in the foreground, while the varied pictures about it shift and change, leaving only a memory. . . .

. . . There was a mist of white bloom beside the kitchen door, like a driving snow storm. From an upper window, the branches set so closely with tiny blossoms, looked like drifts of powdery snow tossed hither and thither by the wind, and again like myriads of feathers laid lightly on one another, as in the task set before Psyche. How long it lasted, evanescent though it appeared! the house was hidden for days beneath the light veil.

Soon came a glow upon the orchard, deep pink at first as the tight little buds peeped out from the twigs, gradually opening and showing the rosy petals to be

white on the inner side. What a miracle of beauty is in the bridal dress of an apple tree, how exquisite are the sprays of bud and blossom, all alike and yet each with its own peculiar charm of color and form! The deep pink of the buds grew paler as they opened, till the white petals showed the full grown flower, delicately veined with rose.

Not all the orchard was astir, however, some trees had spent themselves last year and now could show only green leaves, while others were full of color and fragrance. How delicious it was to saunter beneath the flower-filled branches and drink in the sweetness, while the bees murmured contentedly in the honey-laden cups. One old tree just below my window was actually a bunch of flowers, as I looked out upon it day after day, watching the slow unfolding of bud into blossom, until the white petals fluttered to the ground and were spread like summer snow over the grass.

Under the orchard boughs the slanting sunbeams cast long, slender shadows on the tall waving grass, on the golden buttercups and white daisies, and on the filmy heads of wild parsnip like gossamer lace. A few days ago the grass was overspread with the lavender-pink flowers of the erigeron or sweet scabious, like pale asters, great beds of them swaying together as the breeze crossed the field; now their place is taken by these later comers. The flower procession passes by

with rapid step, one must look and watch sharply to keep pace with it.

What a succession of flowers I have seen in these few weeks, when the violets and anemones and houstonias began the tale, when the dogtooth violets uplifted their golden chalices above the spotted leaves, the pale bells of the *Uvularia* rang out their fairy chimes, while the columbines swung by the bank, the trilliums stood under the trees and the tiarella tossed its misty foam of blossom beside the streamlet. The woods were brightened by the wild cherry and apple and plum, the flowering dogwood and wayfaring bush gleamed through the tangle of undergrowth, and the thorn tree lighted the wayside like its English cousin, the May.

Meanwhile the meadows were pink with the dainty cups of the wild geranium, the graceful curving stalks of Solomon-seal hung out their translucent bells, and on apparently a twin stem with its similar row of leaves, grew tall and erect a spray of white flowerets, called false Solomon-seal, since it is so like its neighbor.

Now the rosy flush of the pink azalia glows far in the forest depths and greets us by the roadside, and soon appears the crowning glory of all as the laurel unfolds its pink buds, and the wonder of its blossoming covers the world, spreading like a flood across every rocky pasture and bleak hillside, reaching far under the trees, lining the wayside with great bushes

heaped high with the innumerable cups, so curiously wrought and veined and tinted, all pink and white among the shining leaves of restful green.

Almost a month the beauty lasted, one hillside following another in its display, the color fading from one spot only to be kindled again elsewhere. Later, we sought and found the one favored place where grew the wild rhododendron in all its sylvan loveliness, far under the trees where the swamp kept the plants moist and vigorous. Great pink and white clusters of flowers held themselves aloft on the brown stems, the color less varied than in the garden rhododendron but even more exquisite in its delicacy. It was a delight to come upon the bushes in the shadows of the wood, the smooth dark green of the leaves giving just the requisite contrast to the pale pink and pure white of the blossoms.

Among these more striking and conspicuous summer beauties, we did not fail to notice the lesser claimants for our attention, as they modestly passed us day by day. The orange rays of the hawk weed, irreverently termed the devil's paint brush, flamed out amid the white daisies, by the wayside we saw the pink convolvulus peeping through the leaves, the feathery clusters of meadow rue stood tall and slender above the moist land where the nodding yellow lily swung its bells. Wandering airs brought a whiff of sweetness from behind the stone wall and we caught a glimpse

of broad white clusters of elder or a garden of wild roses, and rarely, only rarely, we saw the hare bells, blue fairy censurs swaying in the soft air.

Soon along the high banks were spread the low white spires of Jersey tea, and a scarlet gleam from the meadow brought a memory of English poppies, albeit the color belonged to our own red field lily, its flame rising straight upward from the grass. The golden rod flaunted its banners everywhere when its time was come, illuminating the dusty banks, shedding a radiance over field and hill, while the water courses were made glorious by the cardinal flower, most gorgeous of all. The superb color flashed out among the grasses on the bank of the stream, a tall, glowing spike of red stood midway in the current, a cluster of flowers gleamed under the alder boughs. Later the blue dome above was repeated in its depth of azure, as the fringed gentian came to glorify the hillsides and give yet another of the color pictures all about us. In the moist places near the brook hung the orange drops of the jewel weed, and the broad heads of the Joe Pye weed attracted the honey-sipping butterflies to the pale mauve flowerets. Over stone wall and thicket climbed the feathery clematis, by the road stood the stalks of the yellow evening primrose, and the tribe of asters began to show themselves abroad, white and purple and lavender stars, while from out the wood shone the gold of the wild sun flowers. Here and there

a lonely pond was starred with the beautiful white lilies, fringed with arrow head and pickerel weed, and soon the countless berries of autumn, red and blue and scarlet, glittered on flower stalk and wayside shrub, and the blackberry vines drooped under their burden of fruit.

Thus the long procession winds its way through the sunny hours of June and July, under the hazy sky of August, refreshed by the crisp, cool breezes of September. Its march leads us in and out of the woods, along the brookside, across the wet meadows, and up the steep hill slopes. Much more might be seen if we lingered and watched, even though summer has passed in all her fulness and maturity. The pageant of the changing leaf, the illumination of the woods, is yet to come.

THE ORCHARD AND THE MEADOW.

It is impossible not to dwell more fully on the orchard, so near us, so rich in changeful beauty. Such a quiet, tranquil spot, filled with ever shifting lights and shadows. At first the trees were pink with the little buds, resolutely closed against the entreaty of Spring, it was long before they were ready to yield. But there came a day of warm sunshine, of soft, wooing airs, and gradually they stirred and began to unroll their petals. Each morning, as I looked out upon the apple tree below my window, the pink was fainter, the

buds were fuller, till at length a few white flowers were set on the twigs like tiny, single-petalled roses, and after a warm rain had soaked the earth and the sun shone once more, the entire tree was white with blossom. Meanwhile, the whole orchard was a-bloom, here pink, there white; now a small tree was covered close with flowers, and again only one branch was touched with beauty, while the rest bore green leaves alone. I could wander down the long ranks, and drink in the sweetness with each breath, and look up at the blue sky of June, the whole air fragrant and full of light.

Under foot was a second beauty; all through the fresh young grass were blue and white housatonias and white strawberry blossoms, long stemmed purple violets stood above them, and there, close beside a dark tree trunk, was a bed of pale straw-colored bell wort, stirring in the breeze. Ferns were just uncurling their fronds, by the stone wall grew the tall green plumes with the brown fruit half way up the stalk.

The orchard had been planted on a steep side hill, in orderly rows, stretching far down to the wall which divided it from a strip of pasture land bordering on the meadow, and the low, sweeping branches made a covert of cool green shade around the gnarled old trunks. It is so obliging in apple trees not to be mathematically straight, so much more inviting to twist and turn their

boughs at every conceivable angle from the main trunk, and to let even that run horizontally on occasion.

But the blossom time of the apple tree is brief, a little space wherein it may marvel and rejoice at its own loveliness; soon the white petals drift down and float away, falling on the grass at their feet, even venturing in at the open window like butterflies. The leaves wax stronger and more abundant, till now the orchard boughs are green instead of pink and white. The birds still haunt them, cheery little sparrows, some with "song to them" as Fiona Macleod says, others with only a contented little "chip". A pair of small black and white wood peckers run up and down the limbs of the tree by the house, hunting for grubs and such small fry, busy, active little creatures they are. I am not sure that many birds are nesting in our orchard, but from within its borders can be heard many a call and answer, many a song or tuneful whistle, for the oven-bird reiterates his one phrase, the song-sparrow warbles and trills, the hermit thrush utters his clear sweet note from the shelter of the pine wood on the hill. On a young oak, just in its first freshness of leaf, is a gleam of red as a scarlet tanager alights on a branch and another follows him. How glorious the vivid color is, we forgive him his harsh, unmelodious call as we watch the flame of his flight from tree to tree.

As the days go on, new beauties come to the orchard, the grass now is closely set with lavender stars,

growing thick and abundant and overtopping the grass blades. Very pale and soft is the tinge of color on the slope, running down hill like a stream of light. Fuller and fuller grow the ranks, it seems as if there was no room for anything else, but presently a white daisy ventures to raise its head, and before we can turn back to see, the picture is transformed. Imperceptibly the purple fades and disappears, to be succeeded in even greater luxuriance by white and gold. Myriads of upturned daisy faces look into your own, the ground is white far under the trees and in the open field. At one corner, close by the house, buttercups have come to the party, tall clusters of pure gold shine radiantly in the sunlight against the white and green, yet the daisies are the elect and inherit the earth, sprinkling it thickly with their snow.

Great plumes of *Osmunda* grow by the stone wall, waving lazily in the soft air, green and stately they stand, high above the grass and flowers. Ferns are in great favor here, such masses of them all through the woods; standing in tropical luxuriance by the roadside are the *Osmundas*, pale red in the meadow are their sisters of the royal house, the dark shimmering spears of Christmas fern and the delicate beauty of maiden hair may be seen on the steep bank where the shade is deepest.

The succession of new comers to the orchard floor keep us ever on the watch. Under the July sun a

richer, ruddier gold mingles with the daisies, the brilliant hue of the cone flowers overpowers the paler buttercups and glows in the light of noonday. We discover to our joy the nodding bells of the yellow lily, swinging gaily on their stalks. A single cluster on its tall stem is like the seven branched golden candlestick in the Temple, only here droop eleven chalices of gold, each one perfect.

Yet another charm of the place remains, the shifting lights and shadows underneath the roof of leaves. In the early morning when the sun first peeps over the hilltop, the shadows lie long and slender on the grass, stretching far down the hillside. As the day grows older, they flicker and change, for the great fleecy clouds sail across, darkening the sky, obscuring the light for an instant, and then they are gone and the sun shines forth again in splendor, its beams pierce through the leaves overhead, no longer content to steal under the branches.

At noonday, only a narrow circle of shade surrounds the moss grown trunk, it is all clear, brilliant, open, no secret hiding-places left, but as the afternoon wanes and the June sun begins to decline, the shadows reach upward on the slope, they steal up hill now and are long and slender once more.

When it is haying time, how delightful to watch the sweep of the scythe as the tall ripe grass falls before it, how delicious is the scent of the new-mown hay, lying

in the hot sun, full of sweetness and warmth. We watch the men as they toss it into cocks and ridges and the next day spread it to the sun again, and finally see the hay wagons, loaded high, drawn into the barn where all the space is filled with the fragrant harvest.

Now we can see farther under the trees to the other end of the orchard, the shadows are less shifting for the grass no longer waves with every breath of air. And from underneath the branches one can look far across the meadow and watch the cloud shadows drift, light and darkness succeeding each other on the level floor, and can see the hills beyond the valley, bright in the sunlight or deep blue in the shadow, now indistinct and motionless, now with every tree clearly defined and astir.

The meadow was once wholly mowing land, an important part of the farm, great barns stood on it, filled anew each summer with warm, fragrant hay, ready for the winter supply. Now its day of usefulness seems ended, neglect has allowed the weeds and bushes to encroach till there is little left of the grassy field, broad and level; only a mass of low willows, of under-brush, of rank weeds and coarse grass, not productive in the farmer's estimation. Will it ever be reclaimed, I wonder, or will it be left to grow up more and more till it joins the wood-land on either side.

It must have been a goodly sight, the broad meadow of waving grass, the activity of the hay-makers, the

great wains heaped high, drawn by the slow paced oxen, and then the barns well filled and sweet. But even now the meadow has a beauty of its own, the bushes and water weeds make many a variation of green, in May the wild plum and shad-blow, as the country children call it, toss a veil of bridal white across it, the pink azalia blushes rosily on the borders, and the laurel shines out in the day of its splendor. Far in its depths the little frogs whistle tunefully, the deep bass of the bull-frog comes up from the swamp, on the edge by the stone wall is heard the strange guttural note of the yellow-billed cuckoo as he calls to his mate, and at twilight the fire-flies sparkle as they flit to and fro in the gathering dusk. Sometimes the mist gathers and creeps in and out of the meadow, rising white and ghostly, filling the valley like a sea, sometimes the long trailing veils float upward along the water courses, clinging to the slopes and marking where the brooks ripple silently between the bushes, and then the young moon hangs her crescent in the western heavens till the whole valley is flooded with silvery light.

MOUNT RIGA.

How cool and fragrant it was under the trees as we climbed up the steep mountain side! The boughs met together above our road, rustling their leaves, the green pointed fingers of the chestnuts, the sturdy out-

stretched palms of oak and maple, the fluttering tremulous little hands of the birches. The beech trees, too, so pre-eminently tidy among the wood dwellers, the smooth, round gray trunks dappled with a paler tint, and the leaves clean and crisp and shining. They were all there, and many another beside, poplars quivering with excitement, grave stately pines waving slowly, the bright tips were freshening the hemlocks, wild cherries, a hop-horn beam with its drooping green clusters, walnuts, and dainty white birches, all crowded the roadside. And beneath the interwoven branches were great beds of ferns, all kinds of them, dark, glossy, vigorous, soft dainty sprays finely notched, tall fronds like an up-springing fountain of green. Among these peeped out small flowers, white waxen blossoms of the partridge vine, spikes of pyrola with inverted cups climbing the stem, here and there a belated columbine or violet, while the flowering raspberry displayed its deep pink blossom above the rest.

There was music on our way, beside us from the beginning, a little brook ran down to meet us, singing and chattering, murmuring softly and then exulting loudly as it rippled over the stones, danced across the pebbles, whispered to itself along the level shallows or leaped joyously in a white foam over a rocky corner and then loitered in a shadowy pool. Such a cheery brook was a delightful companion as we went slowly on uphill all the way, but presently the stream was left

below our path, the bank grew steeper till a deep ravine sheltered the water as it came down from the mountain side and its voice must be listened for, it was less audible amid the rustling of the tree tops and the straining of the horses as they toiled up the steep ascent. Still we could catch an occasional sight of the brook or hear a murmur from the depths, and presently our driver stopped, and pointed dramatically across an opening in the tree tops. There, far away, we could see a black wall of rock, and over its many ledges fell our brook in successive white cascades, now down one side, now the other, here uniting in a broader veil of spray, falling, falling, a never ceasing stream, an apparently inexhaustible supply. It was most picturesque, thus framed in by the tree tops, the blue sky over head, but it was not feasible to approach nearer, so we bade good-bye to the joyous stream and went our several ways.

We were not without the companionship of running water, however, for before we reached the summit another brook came into sight on the other side of the road, less broad, less noisy, but still charming. It ran more quietly under the shade of the alders, and was bordered by tall grass and sedge, by swaying stems of white meadow rue and spikes of yellow loosestrife, overhung by white clusters of elder whose sweet breath filled the air as we passed. The stream came down from a great pond, almost a lake, and in years gone

by had seen much activity and industry in the now quiet spot among the upland meadows and had even taken part therein.

For all that a young vigorous forest now covers the slopes, the land once was tilled and cultivated and made profitable, for there were thriving farms stretching along the hillside, iron was dug out of its bosom, and even the placid waters of the wide pond, which now glitter idly in the sunlight and lap the wooded shore, were once used to run swiftly through a mill race and turn the wheels of a forge, wherein mighty ships' anchors were cast.

It is strange to come upon these broad waters far up on the heights, for there are several natural ponds of great size, close together. In fact, this whole region and below the mountain is full of lakes large and small, giving brightness and clearness and breadth to the landscape, while the many hurrying streams, coming from the hills, add a touch of vivacity, of joyousness and life.

Climbing steadily upward, we came at length to the ridge which runs for a long distance on a comparative level, just below the actual mountain summit, and here began the spectacle which was to reward us for our climb, albeit so delightful a toil needed no reward. The road was narrow and tree shaded, the branches bending across confidentially, even stretching into the

wagon as we went leisurely on; there was no brook to sing to us now, but in its stead a wonderful sight.

For miles, the way was lined and bordered and decked with mountain laurel in its ecstasy of bloom. We had seen laurel before, seen it in single bushes, in masses spread over the hillsides, in high, flower laden trees by the way, peeping out of the wood, standing on the open pasture in the sunshine, everywhere laurel in abundance, and everywhere beautiful. But the best, the most glorious sight was reserved for the mountain top. We knew now why it was called mountain laurel.

All about us clustered the flower-set bushes, close at our side on the low bank, spreading far under the boughs, stretching away in the woods where the sun fell through the roof of green and made a radiance of light. Now the blossoms were pure white, spotless against the leaves so dark and glossy; now they seemed to throb with an innocent pride in their own loveliness and glow like the petals of a pink rose, and again only a faint blush tinged their pureness. It was hard to tell wherein existed the rosy color; was it due to the veining on the dainty cups, or was it in the cup itself, a suffusion, a delicate bloom of pink over the whole? Each one may judge and decide for himself, and meanwhile he may revel in the delicious variations on the one shade.

Farther and farther we penetrated, more and more

wonderful the pageant seemed. Not a pageant, that is too self conscious a word for the simple, unconscious loveliness, only blossoming in its own appointed way, only giving forth grace and color in the woods, under the trees, wherever the place was made ready for its coming. There was no monotony in the picture, a careless observer might say, "Oh yes, laurel under the trees," but what an infinite variety of beauty was there, in truth infinite because its source was infinite. A bed of spotless blossoms, white as snow, and we said, "This is the most beautiful." A long branch, thickly covered with glowing pink, and we exclaimed that nothing could outdo that rosy color. Again, the cups, so skillfully wrought, were deeply veined and streaked, and then a great mass stretched far away below the leaves and the sun fell on it till it was like the innermost heart of an opal, like a single lovely flower with wide open radiant petals, like a soft tinted sea-shell reflecting the light.

Words failed as the vision still continued, and we drove silently between the banks of blossoms, only looking eagerly on either side that we might imprint it all on that inward eye, to be pictured forth again when the actual presence had vanished. Very beautiful had been the passing of the laurel; but the glory of it all culminated on this upland pilgrimage where we saw its blossoming on the mountain top.

WILD RHODODENDRON.

It is a rare, shy plant, our native rhododendron, loving to bloom unseen, or at best preferring somewhat inaccessible spots. In New England it is but seldom to be found, although further south, in the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina or in Kentucky, it flourishes in great profusion, lighting the gloomy ravines and deep rocky gorges with its beauty. One broad tract exists, however, among the hills of western Connecticut, where the straggling bushes spread for acres, and where the glorious flowers hold their cups aloft in the shadows and in the sunlight, careless whether they be seen or no.

It was our good fortune to learn in season of the treasure hid in the swamp, and to visit it on a day of days, when the sky overhead was brilliant blue and the sun shone with July fervor, tempered by a wind blowing straight from the northwest, fresh and cool and deliciously sweet.

Turning off the highway at a hospitable farmhouse where the young mistress kindly volunteered to show us the way, we crossed a hay field where the children were clambering upon the great wagon, full to overflowing. Then through some bars and by a cart-path into the pasture, filled with hard hack and blueberry bushes, we came to the wood. Under pine trees and oaks, picking our way over moss-grown stones and

brown stumps inlaid with lichens, passing beds of waving fern where the odorous waxen blossoms of the partridge berry shed their sweetness under foot, winding our way between high bushes of laurel still in bloom, although it was weeks since we espied the first pink buds, we reached at length the outposts of the rhododendrons.

Masses of thick, leathery leaves, on tall, twisted brown stems, stood higher than our heads, and set proudly thereon were the clusters of pink and white. The buds were closely nestled together in a pink cone, but as they opened each blossom was distinct and individual, on its own short stem. The five petals, of delicate pink or spotless white, formed a deep cup, vase-like in shape, wherein one petal was marked with fine dots of pale apple green, and the stamens surrounding the pistil bent towards it as if in obeisance before a throne. A circlet of flowers, rising higher in the centre, they stood like royal princesses, contrasting with the setting of dark green leaves, each cluster complete in itself, and yet the beauty of the individual enhanced by the stateliness of the multitude. On every side they rose, here high above our heads, wholly open where the sun had coaxed them out, their pink tinged in the shade and spreading low on the ground. Occasionally, a laurel bush had joined the throng, its leaves smaller, more pointed, glossy in the sunlight, the dainty little cups, so wonderfully moulded and

veined, in striking contrast to the larger, fuller blossoms of the rhododendron.

Such a lavish display as it was, while farther away, under the trees and in the swamp, the bushes grew taller and more luxuriant, blooming unseen with only their own loveliness for excuse, leaving the buds to unfold, the petals to open and the exquisite coloring to reveal itself without the need of human admiration.

Among all the varied delights of wood and meadow and hillside in this flower laden summer among the hills, is the remembrance of the wild rhododendrons, shining far away in the wood, ever blooming, ever fresh.

A VILLAGE IN NEW ENGLAND.

It is midsummer, and the sun is shining down upon the little village, nestled among the hills. Overhead, the long spreading branches of the elms meet and interlace, and the shadows lie like a network on the ground beneath. The sunbeams flicker through the leaves on the grass beside the way, and on the smooth green turf in front of the white houses. Fine old houses they are, broad and ample and generous in their proportions, speaking of by-gone days; some square and spacious with a spreading roof and hospitable porch upheld by fluted columns, others longer, with the roof slanting more steeply and an imposing row of pillars across the front. Tall trees, elms and maples, stand in the door yards, with here and there a great buttonwood showing white patches on the trunk where the bark has curled and fallen, according to its custom. Occasionally a lilac hedge divides neighbor from neighbor, or a clump of syringa bushes may be seen by the kitchen door, but there is an air of friendly intercourse, having no need to define individual boundaries, and it is not surprising to find that the same names are repeated over and over in the town chronicles, that many of those who know and love the little place may trace their family tree back to a common ancestor.

Such is one of the peculiarities of a New England country town. The descendants of the early settler may have thriven or been unfortunate — their achievements may be known far away from home, or only recognized in their native place, but there is a feeling of kinship among them all. In after years the children's children return, often bearing other names, it is true, but eager to hunt up old ties, to refresh early associations, and show to those who come with them the old house where Grandmother lived, the little building where they went to school, or to seek out reverently in the old grave yard the stones which commemorate the virtues of those who came before them.

Behind the little village rise the hills, with here fertile fields or open pastures on the slopes, there thick woods covering the ridges. Many roads lead upward, for man's natural desire is to rise above the things of every day, and some adventurous spirits have planted themselves on the heights. What an outlook it is, the green slopes leading the eye downward to the smooth valley below where the broad river runs, flashing in the sunlight, while beyond, across the meadows, rise the hills. Tier after tier, some smooth with cultivated fields, others thickly wooded, they press like billows against the horizon, and beyond and above them all is the blue summer sky. A soft haze lies over the whole, half hiding, half revealing the distant peaks, subduing the brilliancy of the sunlight, lending an air of mystery

and charm to what is perchance commonplace. Half sight is often more alluring than a clearer vision.

In every direction we find the outlines varied, we learn to recognize the different summits, to see where among their folds and valleys lie our neighbor towns and villages, to trace the course of the placid river and its tributaries, even though invisible by reason of a projecting spur, or stretch of woodland. One great charm of a landscape is the near foreground, merging imperceptibly into farther distance, till it is finally lost against the sky, and this charm our view of the valley and hills possesses to the full. We can see it all, in continuous sequence, the eye is not forced to bridge a gulf abruptly but is led by slow gradations till the end is reached.

On one of the roads leading to the upland heights is a ravine, deeply cut. A tiny streamlet glistens far below, the sides are clothed with trees and bushes, creeping vines trail over the stems and birds sing in the thicket. It is not long in extent, it is near the dwellings of men, the dusty highway is within a stone's throw of it, but the little cleft in the hillside has all the charm and solitude of the high mountains, so remote does it seem from the world. Entering its cool shade from the road, bright with the glare of noontide, we tread our way downward, under oaks and birches, turning to cross the little brook on a slender rustic bridge of fir stems, from which we look down upon the

thread of water below. In spring it may well be full and wide, for the bridge stands high, that it may keep above the stream even at its flood, when tribute is paid from many a rivulet, born of melting snows and early rains, hastening over the pastures and fields to the channel already worn. As we follow the winding path, well shaded by trees, it brings a memory of distant Hawthornden and the walk by the river on the way to Roslin Chapel where stands the 'Prentice pillar, carved by an unknown hand in delicate scrolls and twining wreaths. We emerge from the shadows, leave the narrow path, and across an old terraced garden we catch a glimpse of the distant hills, blue and dim in the summer haze. Above the garden is an ancient house, set there a century ago, built of dark red brick, its sombre rich coloring enhanced by the white trimmings on window and cornice and eaves. Very stately and dignified it looks, on one side screened by tall elms which stand closely about the grassy enclosure and shut it in from the road. Beyond are white sheds leading to the barn, forming a long continuous line of building, broken only by graceful rounded arches which mark the division. Along the roadside is a high hedge of lilacs, full of color and sweetness in the spring days, which shelter the old house from the passer-by as he climbs the hill, for we realize now that our ravine path has led us high above the village.

We may look from the highway through a gate, out

in the lilacs, to the other side of the house, where a path leads us, as we venture in, to a porch, overlooking the garden, and showing us the hills beyond. A handsome old house it is, standing there on the steep hillside, no modern balcony or jutting window to break the straight lines, but solid and substantial, a warm rich note of color amidst the green setting. A wide hall leads from door to door and out of this rises the staircase with polished rail and twisted balusters, while on the left of the hall is a single room for the whole length, with many windows. On the wall is a wonderful paper which portrays the stately buildings of the city by the Seine, what time the horses of St. Mark's rested in the hands of the great emperor for a few short years.

We may give our fancy free scope and people the old house with figures of a former generation, weave a story about the place, wherein love and sorrow and happiness may strive together for the mastery. Ghosts may flit before us about the high rooms, may wander in the garden full of bloom and fragrance, may look sadly from the windows to the blue hills far away and catch the gleam of the water in the moonlight, as it glides silently through the meadows. Romance is the fitting atmosphere for an old house, where young life once dreamed its dreams, and loved and suffered and hoped, full of eager desire to know the future.

Across the way is another old homestead, this time

of wood, with sloping roof and low, covered piazza from which the whole sweep of valley and hill is to be seen. The meadow lands beyond the silver ribbon of the slow moving river are sparsely dotted with farm-houses, red or white as fancy or the local painter has ordained. Each has its group of graceful drooping tree tops, each has its own chosen outlook toward the hills or across the fields to the river and the farther shore. As we look down upon the smooth floor it is here vivid green with standing rye, there yellow where the grain has been harvested already, now we see a marking like bars where rows of corn have been planted and the fresh green blades rise out of the brown earth, now it is the hay field with small pygmies moving to and fro in seemingly aimless fashion. Beyond are stretches of woodland, dark green in contrast to the sunlit meadows, the trees reaching upward to the lower hill slopes, as these last mount higher and higher. The ridges lie in various directions, the valleys between are almost imperceptible on the wooded sides, and the whole looks like a sea with the waves arrested as they rise and fall, and turned to earthborn hills, rolling on until the horizon is reached.

There is a garden in the little village, rich with color and fragrance. All day long the sun pours down upon it till the flowers glow beneath his touch, the wind passes over it, swaying the slender stems, bees mur-

mur among the blossoms, in the branches birds twitter and call.

Stately larkspurs grow there, drinking in the blue of the sky till every shade of color from zenith to horizon is reflected in their petals; white foxgloves unfold their bells one by one till the stalk is full and the bees "murmur by the hour" in their depths. There are great masses of primroses, golden like the sunlight, primroses of the day, not delaying for the bidding of the evening hour; low purple pansies, some with yellow centres and markings, some yellow, some white, and others like great single violets.

In the corner grows the iris. How the sunshine lingers on the soft petals of the blossoms, almost translucent; the light seems to pass through in subdued radiance. Such exquisite coloring; we question which is the more beautiful, the shading of purple and lavender, the tint of a ripe plum with white streaks and lines, the melting yellow, or the pure stainless white, all blending together in perfect harmony. The texture, too, is marvellous in its softness and delicacy, and yet it will endure a sudden tempest, apparently unscathed. We divine whence the craftsman learned the secret of his crepes and silks in a land where the love and admiration of flowers becomes almost a worship.

Great clumps of Canterbury bells, royal purple and white, moulded daintily, open their fair cups to the day. Multitudes of them stand close together and yet

each bell is distinct and individual. How graceful is the curve between the five starlike points which outline the edge. These flowers seem to absorb the sunlight and give it out as moonlight, so white are they.

Beside these are blue campanulas, blue as violets are blue, with a purple tinge. They are near akin to the Canterbury bells, but smaller and more slender, reminding us of the wild harebell as we see it growing along a bank in the woods. Indeed, the mistress of the garden has brought some of these wild cousins to bloom in a sheltered spot, simple and sweet like country maids.

The poppy bed yonder is all alive with color, the wide open petals rising above it on their slender stalks like gay butterflies hovering over the ground on outspread wings. Vivid scarlet like the glint of a tanager's breast, paler cherry, soft tender pink like the inmost heart of a sea shell, white like a cherry blossom or a snow flake, they dance and mingle in the breeze, tossed hither and thither by its wayward fancy, making merry in the decorous garden like a bevy of young girls.

The glory of the garden delays a little as if to mark its coming among the beauty already there. The white Madonna lilies, white with a purity well suited to their message of the Annunciation, are slowly opening, one by one, on the tall stems, till a warmer sun quickens their unfolding, and one morning a wonder

of beauty transfigures and heightens all the rest. Each swaying green stalk bears aloft a coronal of white blossoms, the shining, radiant petals surrounding a heart of gold. Like a sceptre for the queen of the flowers, it raises its head as if exulting in its own loveliness. Here half a dozen grow together, filling the air with their rich perfume, here one single stem stands alone as if to challenge comparison. White and gold, gold and white, these are the royal colors, and all others, blue and yellow and scarlet, pink and lavender and purple, all are secondary to the white and gold of the lily.

Do you see a reflection of the garden, I wonder? Do you catch the sheen of the sunlight on blue larkspur, on white foxglove, on golden primrose and purple pansy? Do you wonder at the delicacy of the iris, at the white softness of the bell flowers, at the gaiety of the many tinted poppies? Do you hold your breath as you gaze at the purity and fairness of the white lilies, radiant with light, as if set in a shrine, a sanctuary? If you find in my words but a glimmer of all this loveliness, I am content.

THE VALLEY OF STREAMS:

A GLIMPSE OF A REMOTE ITALIAN VILLAGE.

ACROSS THE HILLS.

It is a far away corner of the earth that I would like to show you; where the great snow-crowned Alps stretch downward into the plains; where the glaciers of Monte Rosa give birth to the streams which run gaily through the high valleys, on their way to the sea.

To reach this far unknown land, we travelled among the beautiful Italian Lakes, which stretch like a string of precious, flashing jewels in an emerald setting above the plains of Lombardy. By Como and Bellagio, between the steep shores of Lugano, we came to the greater lake, the Lago Maggiore, where the enchanting Borromean Islands float idly on the broad surface, now blue and dimpling in the sunlight, and again growing dark and menacing as a sudden thunder storm breaks upon it. Farther yet we journeyed, to the little lake of Orta, and from here we were to set forth on less familiar ground, finding our way across the hills to the valley which would lead us into the domain of the snow capped Monte Rosa, the Queen of the Alps.

The June morning was yet in its early freshness

when we crossed the shining water and landed at the little village of Pella. Behind us lay the Lago d' Orta nestled among its protecting mountains which dipped in wooded slopes to meet the blue ripples. Before us rose the mountain pass which we must traverse to reach our goal. It was the past and the present, the yesterday and the today, here joining hands, for here the real pilgrimage begins.

The narrow road, paved with round cobble-stones, at first runs abruptly upward from the landing place, between old stone walls overhung with vines and set with tiny bright flowers, then wanders more slowly through scattered hamlets where the women are at work in the fields. Soon the way turns under the shade of great chestnut forests, rising higher and higher till we look down into the depths of a gorge, and see a silver thread of water far below, listening to its faint murmur.

Sometimes we skirt the edge of a rocky wall, the narrow path of crumbling stone seeming an insecure footing. But the patient, sure-footed little donkey plods slowly on, her mistress striding ahead with a firm, assured step, turning often to cry out reassuringly or sternly, "Avanti, Brigalla!" while Brigalla, sooth to say, takes her own time without much heed to either encouragement or reproof.

Here we cross a slender bridge above a noisy brook, leaping down impetuously; ferns and flowers grow on

the brink and sway gently as the air stirs them. There, at a turn in the rough path, a flock of sheep halt a moment to watch the cavalcade and then bound away in terror, or some peasant women come down to meet us, great bundles of brushwood on their heads. All the slopes are covered with the chestnut woods, the long leaves are fresh and glistening in their summer green, as they rustle softly above us. In the branches the birds are singing happily, and we hear the insistent, repeated note of the cuckoo, again and yet again, the trees seem full of unseen voices, as they call and answer all through the sunny morning.

At length we reach the top of the pass, the crest of the Col di Colma, as the mountain spur is called which divides the neighboring valleys, and turning aside from the path, we rest contentedly on the short grass and eat our luncheon, while we look at the view before us. At our very feet lies the little lake of Orta, peeping out beyond the tree tops; further away glitter the bright waters of Maggiore and Varese. Still further in the distance stretches the great Lombard plain, the air above it quivering in the heat, for though the breeze is fresh and cool on our wooded height, the ardent Italian sun is pouring down on the broad expanse. Were our sight more keen, we might see countless white towns and villages and even catch a glimpse of spires and pinnacles, the wonderful carved

fretwork of stone, like filmy lace, reared high in the blue air, which is the vast cathedral of Milan.

In the other direction we see snowy peaks rising above dark mountain slopes, and with a thrill of anticipation realize that we are looking at Monte Rosa, the Mountain of Glaciers, as one writer gives the derivation of the name. Our faces are turned towards the white summits as we descend, although the actual vision is soon lost below lesser hills.

Through fields gay with flowers, pausing here and there to gather great handfuls, we come down into a diminutive village with its narrow street, shaded by the overhanging houses, where the children watch open-eyed, as the little procession passes. Into the open again and along the green bordered lane where an old peasant greets us courteously, murmuring something about the "Flight into Egypt," as Brigalla and her rider go by.

A little longer, and we stop where a small house of refreshment marks the village of Civiasco, and with a parting glass or two of the red wine of the country, thin and sour, bestowed on Brigalla's mistress, we bid them both farewell and establish ourselves happily in the little carriage which has come to meet us, while our late companions start unconcernedly on the long walk over the pass back to Pella. Driving comfortably over the excellent road as it winds and turns on the hillside, we catch sight at last of the broad river, flow-

ing placidly in the sunlight, of the town stretched along its bank. Behind the houses we see a high hill, almost a mountain, on whose rounded summit stands a group of buildings, white and shining against the blue of the sky, like a dream city. The river is the Sesia, the town is Varallo, the dream city is the Sacro Monte, or Mountain of the New Jerusalem, and as we clatter beneath an archway into a paved courtyard, surrounded by vinehung balconies, we are glad to know that we have reached the end of the first stage in our journey.

A typical Italian town is Varallo, with the narrow streets where the houses lean sociably across and the sun can scarcely peep through, with the open square adorned with a statue of the ubiquitous Victor Emmanuel, the market place full of vegetables and chickens, brought in early by the country women, and the low wooden stands outside the shop windows where heaps of ruddy and white cherries, scarlet strawberries on their green leaves, and piles of golden oranges are invitingly displayed. Beside a frescoed house is a little fountain where a child stops for a drink, up that narrow street is a vista of trees drooping over a rough stone wall, through yonder archway we can peep into a courtyard where flowers are blooming and a dog lies stretched lazily in the sun. A curious old church is perched high above us, a quaint two-storied stone stairway leads up to it and from its balcony we have

an outlook over the neighboring roofs and chimney pots to the distant mountains.

Scarcely an Italian town, however small, is without its own especial artist whose patient work has helped to make altar and shrine beautiful, and who is venerated and beloved. Varallo is no exception to the rule, and the painter whose frescoes are still bright on wall and rood screen is Gaudenzio Ferrari. Born a few miles lower down in the Val Sesia, at the hamlet of Valduggia, he had the good fortune to flourish in the golden days of the Renaissance, when Raphael and Michelangelo, Titian and Giorgione and Leonardo da Vinci all lived and painted. Ferrari learned somewhat from all, studying at Milan in the school of Da Vinci, going to Perugia where he may have worked with the young Raphael under their common master, Perugino, and later travelling down to Rome, where he eagerly absorbed all that was possible of the genius of his great contemporaries.

But Gaudenzio's fame is not world-wide. His efforts were limited principally to his own province, in many of whose towns still remain altar pieces and Madonnas to witness to his skill. At Vercelli and Novara, at Arona, Saronna and Como, as well as at Valduggia, his birthplace, we may see his frescoes and paintings. Here at Varallo is one of the works by which he is best known, in the little church of Our Lady of Grace. A large rood screen divides the body

of the church and on it are twenty pictures, each one depicting a scene in the life of Our Lord, the story told graphically and with much originality, the colors still vivid and beautiful.

In the open space beside the church, and looking off to the distant mountains, stands a life size statue of the master, which commemorates the pride of his fellow citizens in their own painter. Out of the piazza leads the sacred way, climbing steeply and with many turns up to the Sacro Monte. The well paved road winds beneath chestnut trees, offering a welcome shade from the noonday sun, while between the ranks of close set trunks we catch the gleam of water and hear the refreshing murmur as the Mastalone hurries down through a rocky gorge to join the Sesia.

Late in the fifteenth century, the "Blessed Bernardino Caimi," a Milanese of noble family and vicar of a convent in the city, was sent by Pope Sixtus IV to Jerusalem, for the purpose of making some drawings. While there, he was filled with a longing to reproduce on Italian soil the Holy Sepulchre and its surroundings, as a shrine of pilgrimage for devout believers. On his return from the East, he sought diligently for a spot which should fulfil the needful requirements of natural position and surroundings, finding such an one, to his own satisfaction, at Varallo. Very possibly an additional reason for the choice, which may have influenced the fathers of the church,

was the hope of stimulating the piety and devotion of the little Italian communities of the Val Sesia, in whose midst had been planted certain German colonies, carrying with them the heretical doctrines promulgated by Martin Luther and the German theologians, from which the Church desired to shield her children.

At all events, the pious labor was undertaken and accomplished, to the glory of God and the gratification of the many pilgrims who toiled willingly up the steep ascent, bearing their offerings great and small. On the summit of the hill were placed various chapels in which were represented different scenes in the life of Christ, and it was in these that the genius of Gaudenzio Ferrari found scope. The kindred arts of sculpture and painting, often working side by side, were here employed simultaneously, and today we see the story set forth by terra cotta figures, life size and in realistic attitudes, while at the back of the dimly lighted room are frescoes, into which the figures seem to melt and merge. Both modelling and painting were executed by the master himself, aided no doubt by some of his pupils, or in some instances by the hands of his brother artists in the region, and very impressive and lifelike it all is. Before each chapel is an iron grating, through which the spectator may look with ease, and even when, as in the chapel of the Crucifixion, the number of figures reaches one hundred and

effect, although somewhat startling, is yet
and reverent.

The Holy Sepulchre itself is represented in a large handsome church, built a century later by the Archbishop of Milan, San Carlo Borromeo, who also caused the whole group of buildings to be enclosed by a stone wall.

From the terrace by the church we may look down upon the valley beneath where the river winds placidly between its high, wooded banks with the town upon its shore, and the little villages half hidden among the trees, and far off to the distant mountains towards which we are to travel.

UP THE VALLEY.

Up the valley of streams, where the music of running waters is ever in our ears; where the river is now blue as the sky, now white with foam. Up the valley, where the gray hillsides are tree-shaded, and the sunny meadows are bright with flowers; where the brooks run swiftly through the tall grass, or plunge recklessly over the rocks on the mountain side. This is where I would show you the way.

But first, it may not be amiss to give some little idea of the geography of the country through which we are to journey.

Opening from the mountain chain, of which Monte Rosa is the chief, stretch lateral spurs of lesser chains,

between which are hidden smaller valleys. The valley of the Sesia winds close to the river which flows down from the great mountain itself. Parallel with it for some distance runs the Val Sermenza, named from its river fed by the melting snows and rains of the chain of mountains dividing the two valleys, and joining the larger river at Balmuccia, five miles above Varallo. The upper part of this second valley separates into two smaller defiles, called the Val d' Egua and the Val Piccola. Still nearer Varallo, across another mountain chain parallel to the Val Sermenza, is the Val Mastalone, again with its river rushing through the rocky gorge and joining the Sesia just without the town and beside the Sacro Monte. All these valleys, large and small, are dotted with many a little village and tiny hamlet of but half a dozen houses, perched high on the mountain side, or lying on the grassy meadows beside the stream. Some of these communities are the German colonies, previously alluded to, notably Rima and Rimella in the Val Piccola and the Val Mastalone, where the German tongue is still spoken, and where the orderly and thrifty habits of the Fatherland are still preserved. It is suggested that one reason for the success of these Teutonic settlers is that their own colder climate rendered them more at home in the high altitude of their new dwelling places than the sun loving Italians, who came up to the high valleys from the level of the plains of Lom-

bardy, and were not so well fitted for the struggle with cold and snow and the less fruitful soil. Like all highlanders, the inhabitants of these mountain glens have grown strong and hardy, inured to work in the face of difficulties, and with the kindred virtues of industry, honesty, and hospitality, simply and freely offered.

With this slight preface to acquaint us somewhat with the country and its inhabitants, let us start on our journey from Varallo, on the way to Alagna.

We drive slowly along the excellent road, following the course of the Sesia, crossing, just outside the town, the stream of the Mastalone as it comes swiftly down from the heights past the Sacred Mount. It foams and rushes over the rocky bed, or flows more quietly beside the green meadow; but we will not follow its beckoning today. We must keep to our chosen path in the larger valley, as it winds and turns among the hills.

A beautiful river is the Sesia, sparkling in the sunlight, rushing along white with foam bubbles broken on the boulders in the rapid current, or in more tranquil moments reflecting the blue of the sky. Beside our way are broad meadows, gay with flowers, emerald with stretches of waving hemp. In the fields the peasant women are mowing or tossing the hay. Women are the workers here in Italy, rarely do we see men, they have gone to the cities or perhaps to far-

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off America, leaving their wives and daughters to look after the farm and till the soil. Soon we reach Balmuccia, where the Sermenza emerges from its valley to join the larger river, and where the Val Sesia opens more widely.

Many a great curve do the waters make, we see the stream coming to meet us as it hurries round a bend in the shore, or where the current is deeper it runs swiftly and silently by the grassy edge. Through Scopa with its blossoming orchards and fragrant meadows, we come to Scopello, on higher ground, and halt for our noon day meal. The village does not boast a modern hotel, but at a little inn, set half across the road, we are met with a kindly welcome from our brown eyed hostess, and soon an excellent omelette is smoking on the table. No matter how small the house of entertainment, the traveller can almost invariably be sure of a good omelette, though the bread may be hard and uninviting and the cheese somewhat dry and strong. The house dog came to make acquaintance, and scenting the odor from the kitchen attached himself closely to us, and when, our own appetites being appeased, we surreptitiously handed him the delectable dish, he told us quite plainly that we were the very nicest strangers he had ever encountered.

Luncheon over, I strolled about the little place, camera in hand, followed closely by the grateful dog, evidently with a hopeful sense of favors to come. The

wooden houses seemed set down at random, with short digressions to right and left where I could see a picturesque old barn, the fresh hay piled up behind the bars in the open upper story, or an ancient house mellowed by rain and sunshine to a delicious brown, leaning over the courtyard where children and hens scattered at my approach. As I turned to take a photograph of the stone fountain with its slender stream of water trickling into the basin, one of the young girls, who had been watching my progress with interest, promptly took her stand in front of it, and a second village maiden stood deep in the grass she was mowing while I transferred her to paper. Behind some stone houses lay an open meadow, alder-fringed, past which the boisterous river swept in a wide bend, crossed by a slender bridge, jagged peaks rising in the background.

Soon, however, we had to leave charming little Scoppello and our carriage bore us swiftly along the excellent road, bordered still by flower filled meadows, where the Sesia opened out into broad reaches and quiet pools, deep blue amid the tall grass and graceful hemp. Beech woods clothed the hill sides, tall Spanish chestnuts stood in beauty above the green smooth turf, then the valley grew more wild and desolate with steep mountain sides, cleft by deep ravines. High on the gray rocks, laburnums had found a foothold, and flung their golden treasure lavishly abroad. The pure, rich color shone against the dark background, great

sprays of green and gold hung over a little stream as it fell from the height, a single graceful tree, with its drooping yellow clusters, stood beside a huge boulder or on a patch of green grass. It was like sunlight on the hills, brightening the way like glistening banners embroidered in precious threads.

Little villages lie on our road, sometimes taking possession of both sides of the river, with arched stone bridges crossing high above the swift current, for now the ground rises rapidly and the stream rushes down hurriedly. At one spot the channel narrows into a rocky gorge, spanned by a slender wooden bridge, beneath which the water plunges down the steep wall of stone, like jewels flashing in the sunlight, and then running sedately through the verdant fields.

We rattle through the single narrow street of each hamlet, with barely room for our horses, passing the small hostelries and wine shops where the buxom women greet us with a friendly "Buon giorno," and smile as we respond. Evidently the "forestiere" excite their interest, for windows and doorways are full of smiling faces and we feel as if we were making a royal progress.

The fine old churches are out of all proportion to the apparent poverty of the community. One in particular, at Mollia, stands close upon the road with several stories above our heads, a stone balcony running along the front, carved and ornamented. It would be

delightful to explore them all. Between the villages the broad Government road is well made and kept in excellent repair, each little settlement doing its share. Frequently a stone coping protects the side towards the river as it runs now on a level with us, now far below. Here and there a "torrente," as it is called, comes down from the mountain side across our way, a veritable torrent, undoubtedly, in time of heavy rain or melting snows, but at other seasons a dry bed, full of rounded stones brought down from above by the water and smoothed and polished in the journey. These occasional streams are not furnished with bridges, only a coping on the upper side to guide the flood into a definite channel, so that passers by are left to their own devices. Our driver recounted with evident enjoyment his experience of two days previous, when a family of Germans on their way to Alagna insisted on starting from Varallo just after a twelve hour thunder storm, and while the rain was still falling. We had watched the party set forth from the court yard of our inn, an unfortunate maid on the seat with the driver, father, mother and children packed inside the landau, and had prognosticated a wet journey for them. The driver told us gleefully how they screamed at every jolt and turn, and how, when this especial "torrente" was reached, "full, very full and deep, Signora! but perfectly safe with a good driver," straightening himself proudly, their alarm knew no bounds. The stream

was forced to an accompaniment of cries and protestations while the horses slipped on the loose wet pebbles, and the water even came into the carriage. "Such people should stay at home," he declared. "A German is no mountaineer, he is not like the English," doubtless having, as he thought, discovered our nationality.

Suddenly there hung before us in mid air a vision of snow fields and white peaks, and we had our first near glimpse of the glittering summits of Monte Rosa. Often concealed by a turn in the road, it would flash out again in beauty and beckon us onward. We passed a stream leaping down a wooded cleft in the hillside, crossed the river on a stout bridge from which we could see far up the blue water, shining as it rushed swiftly along, skirted a height and came to the village of Riva Valdobbia, with the frescoed portals on the church overhanging the narrow street where stood the wooden houses. All our way the Sesia had kept us company, now close by our side with a merry song, now retreating behind a green field where we could only catch a glimmer of the wavelets. Here it was farther away, but its place was filled by a lesser stream running by alder fringed banks with a most enticing murmur. Past gardens and cultivated fields, past hill-sides set with beech and chestnut and golden laburnum shining amid the green, past the copper mines of olden times, still worked in primitive fashion, we toiled up a

long hill and then with much shouting and cracking of the whip, the horses galloped through the high sounding Via Margherita, and Corso Reale, the carriage swung round the projecting apse of the church and was drawn up before the Albergo di Monte Rosa. We had reached Alagna.

A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE.

It is an irregular little street where the houses stand at many varying angles, here close on the highway, there retreating and turning aside. They are all built of bare wood, dark and rich with age; on the upper story an open loft is often ornamented with bundles of green herbs hung up to dry between the bars, or with hay piled up to the rafters. Children and hens and dogs all run in and out, or frolic together in the sun. The church stands directly in the middle of the way, so that the road must avoid it; on the outer wall by the broad porch is a large fresco representing the birth of John the Baptist, and Zacharias inscribing the child's name on his tablets, while the messengers wait humbly.

An open space, a "piazza," as the Italians call it, in front of the hotel and beside the church, is the meeting ground of the village, here are to be seen the peasants slowly driving their cattle and sheep up to the high pastures, the old men who pause for a gossip.

Here come the women in the native costume of short petticoat, plaited straight and ample, an embroidered silk apron and gay sash, and the bodice with full white sleeves. The head dress is quite wonderful, long silver pins thrust through the tightly braided hair behind and set in a half circle like a rising sun, while from them hang long fluttering ribbons, generally, it seemed to me, of a deep purple color. They gather in the church porch until the priest summons them within, each one hastily throwing a large silk or white linen handkerchief over her head as she enters. Local guides are lounging before the hotel, evidently hoping that some inexperienced tourist may require their services; their felt hats are ornamented with a sprig of edelweiss, or a chamois beard, or cock's feather, or sometimes by an eagle's plume soft and downy, a mark of prowess, in climbing to the high-set eyrie.

On Sunday mornings, a regular market is held, chiefly of fruit and vegetables displayed on the ground in baskets, while the donkeys, on whose backs it was all brought in from an outlying farm, add their melodious note to the peal of the organ and the chanting of the priests. On one occasion I recall a booth which was set up, exhibiting a fine collection of rough home-made straw hats, which found a ready sale among the men, more solicitous than their wives to shield their heads from rain and sun.

Occasionally a gay strain of martial music is heard,

and a company or two of Italian soldiers march bravely through the village street on their way to or from the heights where they are drilled in mountain manoeuvres. An enemy might cross the Alps like Hannibal. A peal of high-voiced little bells tinkles upon the air, it is a herd of goats going up to the alp for their summer pasture, possibly a recent purchase of the woman who drives them, or the mail coach rattles into sight, the horses galloping, the driver cracking his whip as he draws up with a flourish at the post office. All this is a glimpse of life at Alagna, the highest village in the Val Sesia.

Beside the street flows the river, splashing merrily as it runs past the great rocks in its course, everywhere may be heard the pleasant murmur of water, even in the inn yard where an ever flowing stream is brought down from the heights far above, fresh and cold and clear. Several brooks come down behind the houses from the hillside and are made useful by the women for their washing. Sometimes a thrifty housewife has managed to build a tiny shed into which the water is conducted, so that the work may be done under cover, but often the girls are to be seen by the river bank, busily scrubbing and rinsing and chattering.

The peasants are an industrious class, and make the utmost of the short summer and their small plots of ground. On the slopes of the mountains which surround Alagna on all sides, little kitchen gardens are

planted, the lower side labouriously banked with stones and earth so as to render the ground more nearly level. The soil has to be carried up the steep ascent on the back of the agriculturist, he has to climb up many feet to his miniature farm and work under the scorching sun or in a cold wind, but you constantly observe men and women busily digging and hoeing, while to all appearance the patch of cultivated ground as well as themselves must slide down hill, so sharp is the angle at which they stand. These diminutive gardens give the hillside the effect of a checkerboard, quite incomprehensible at first sight, but when it is understood, admiration is aroused for the industry and perseverance thus manifested.

Still higher on the mountain, the peasants cut the hay for the winter provender of flocks and herds, to be reached only by difficult, rocky paths, requiring every wisp of hay to be carried down on their heads, piled in long wicker baskets which are held in place by straps round the shoulders. It was pathetic to see, as I often did, an apparently old, old woman, wrinkled and careworn, toiling along the road with a great burden on her back, bent nearly double beneath its weight, yet ready to smile and respond to my greeting. I say "apparently old," for meeting such an one with a little child dragging at her skirts, I said to my companion that it must be hard to care for the grandchildren also, being told to my astonishment that the

child was undoubtedly her own. Women age fast in a country where marriage often comes at fifteen, where they work hard and are fairly beasts of burden, but they always seemed happy and contented as I saw them at work.

I remember one day as I was skirting a hillside, I heard laughter and voices high above me, and presently two young girls came lightly down the steep path, each carrying across her shoulders great wooden pails full of milk. The cows graze all summer on the upland pastures, and the dairy maids must climb far up for the daily supply. These two young things were fresh and pretty, with fair hair and rosy cheeks, a legacy, no doubt, from some German ancestor, for Alagna also is one of the colonies of the Fatherland, and many fair-haired men and women are to be seen, although the recognized southern type, with dark eyes and olive tinted skin, is predominant.

One veritable grandmother I met, taking care of her daughter's sturdy little boy, and we entered into conversation. When I told her that I had come all the way across the ocean from America she raised her hands in amazement and called all the saints to witness that it was a wonderful thing to make such a journey, and she looked after me, as I turned away, with an expression of mingled pity and astonishment. But they are a kindly, courteous race, these peasants of the high valleys, always responding pleasantly to the salu-

tation which the stranger soon learns to offer. "Buon giorno," is good morning, while the evening greeting is "Buona sera," the latter being invariably used the moment that the hour of noon has struck. The day begins early for these mountain dwellers, no wonder that by twelve o'clock it seems half over.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

My first walk at Alagna was late on the afternoon of our arrival, when the sun was still high enough to peer above the mountain tops as we started out, and the air was warm and balmy, not always the case at an altitude of nearly four thousand feet. Turning abruptly by the corner of the inn, we picked our way past several little houses set almost athwart the path, and presently heard the roar of water. A boisterous mountain brook came leaping down the hillside, evidently over a rocky bed, for it was all white and foaming as one sees a brook in springtime. This stream was always full and in a hurry, as it rushed down to join the Sesia, always frothing and tumbling under the little bridge. It lay directly across my path every time I walked up the valley and I always stood still to watch the white water, to listen to its exultant song of joy in life and motion.

Leaving the noisy stream behind us, we kept beside the river for a short distance, then crossed it on a

primitive bridge which swayed beneath us, and took our way up a steep path. Here was another small village consisting of but few houses, scattered on the slope. Each little group of houses up and down the mountain side is an independent community, or "paese," as it is called, it has its own church and priest, its own local government, its own rules of conduct, although to the stranger it seems only an extension of the last hamlet he has passed.

A cheerful little streamlet came running down to meet us, the dark clear water offering a contrast to the brook we had just left, with a more familiar, homely tinkle round the stones. Turning aside from the path beside it which led to the alp, as a high mountain pasture is called, we went on through the fields deep in grass and flowers, scarlet poppies, swaying blue bells, a host of gay blossoms whose names and faces were new to us. We passed a farmhouse where an old woman sat in the doorway and the chickens were crowding for their supper, and sauntered on through the gathering dusk, full of fragrant odors and hum of insects. Below us was the Sesia, ready to receive tribute from the frequent brooks running across our way, for the mountain side, on which the snow still lingered, gave birth to many a rivulet and clear little rill.

A sharp descent brought us to the broad river itself spanned by another rustic bridge. Here we stopped

to lean over the wooden rail and listen to the melody of the running water.

It may sound all alike on paper, as I endeavor to picture to you these brooks and rivers which we meet on the hillsides or follow closely in our valley, but in reality how widely one brook differs from its neighbor, how full of music is each voice and yet the song is ever new. The stream curves and bends, it leaps gaily from above, or runs straight and swift in its channel; the alders and willows droop over its bosom, the forest trees are reflected in its placid waters, the ferns grow on its very brim. Now it runs where the walls of rock shut it in, and shadows lie on the pools, or dividing its strength, it holds an island in its embrace. The swirling eddies are white around a boulder, the rapids run swiftly over the stones with their little backward curl, and again the meadows are broad and full of sunshine and the flowers stoop graciously to whisper to the little waves as they ripple softly by.

A river is always beautiful, but peculiarly so, I think, when it comes down from the high places, pure and undefiled, broken into a thousand gleams of light by the obstacles in its way, ever happy, ever eager to reach its appointed end, full of the joy in life that springs from difficulties overcome, always remembering its birth out of stainlessness and solitude. The clouds and the sunlight, the ice and snow on the great mountain summits are its nurse and foster mother, the blue

sky and the winds are its companions, and even though its waters come down to the dwellings of men, it can never quite forget its childhood and youth in the far-off, lonely, beautiful places. It tells us of these as we listen, it is one of the never ceasing voices of Nature whose melodies are infinite.

Our way home lay through the shady road overhung with trees, full and green and leafy; on the rocky wall beside us grew delicate ferns and Alpine blossoms exquisitely tinted. Sprays of the white spirea trembled above our heads like the foam on the river, great mountain buttercups opened their golden chalices, and clusters of the bright mountain pink, rosy red, blushed among the green. Directly on our path, where a tiny rill dripped into a mossy basin, stood one laburnum tree. I had seen them in abundance, earlier, on the far slopes of the hills, now this grew close at hand. Equally beautiful whether near or far, the full shining clusters hung amid the graceful foliage, the gold was living. For many days I watched its radiant loveliness, it was a landmark on my walk, the glorious color deepened and glowed when the sun kissed the flowers at noonday. Gradually the blossoms fell to the ground and floated on the surface of the mossy basin, but even then there was nothing unsightly in its fading, only the beauty was lessened.

Always following the Sesia where it ran beneath the trees or beat with its waves against a huge boulder

half barring the way, on whose gray rock nestled beds of fern, soft cushions set close with bright flowers, and where a bush of glowing Alpenrosen stirred in the breeze, we came back to Alagna while the twilight fell softly. The white brook was still hurrying down to the river as we turned into the little open square.

FROM MY WINDOW.

As I looked out of my window day by day, the most conspicuous object was the rough square stone tower of the church, gray and weatherworn, surmounted by a tapering spire. On the parapet from which rose the latter, a young, vigorous birch tree had grown, and the leaves fluttered continually in the breeze that drew through the valley. It was a pretty sight to see its fresh daintiness and grace springing out of the gray stone, like the child of its old age.

About the tower the swallows wheeled and circled, at dusk they flew hither and thither in aimless turns and sudden dartings like children at play.

It was interesting to watch the village folk gathering for Mass in the early morning, the elder women enjoying a bit of gossip as they waited in the porch, the girls smoothing their aprons and casting demure glances at the sheepish young fellows. One day there was a funeral procession, the cortege coming from one of the remoter houses, headed by the priests in em-

broidered vestments, the Host borne under a silken canopy followed by a number of banners proudly carried by the men, and by a company of women walking bareheaded two by two.

Looking beyond and beside the tower, I could see the winding street till it turned and disappeared, the children playing in the sun. On the green hillside opposite were picturesque chalets set low on the earth as if springing from the soil. Below me stretched broad fields from which was wafted the delicious scent of the new-mown hay, and beyond was a range of mountains on either hand, shutting in the valley. Their flanks were thickly wooded up to the very top, although they could boast a height of eight thousand feet or more. Very different these from the Swiss Alps just across the border, with their bare rocky peaks; here Italy showed her warmth and fertility in the green luxuriant forests which clothed the heights, not merely a belt of evergreens but beeches and maples and chestnut woods.

There was one especial spot on the mountain side facing my window which I loved to watch as the rays of the morning sun fell upon it. It was an open, grassy glade with huge boulders in its midst, and surrounded by tall trees. When the sun climbed above the barrier on the other side of the valley, and the light touched the greensward, every detail flashed into sight like a revelation. I could keep pace with the

illumination as it moved slowly across the grass, rested for an instant on the great stones and lingered on the tree tops; it was like a morning walk.

Then at evening, as the sun sank below the horizon, a soft mellow light bathed the green slopes, the shadows climbed higher, creeping slowly upward till all was dark save the topmost ridge. There too the shadows encroached reluctantly, but the after glow came, spreading over bare rock and dark tree top, a rosy purple flame lighted the whole once more, tinging the clouds and sky with a delicate pink.

One evening when the moon was at the full, it rose directly in the opening between the two lines of mountains, the great disk, golden at first, then turning to silver, poured a flood of light over the whole scene, while the Queen of Night sailed majestically through the clouds. A marvellous picture, almost unearthly in its beauty.

BY THE RIVER.

The walk beside the Sesia soon grew familiar as day after day I turned my footsteps up the valley of streams. There was no other road. From Varallo a carriage could reach Alagna only by the highway over which I myself had come, all else was shut out by the high mountain walls. Beyond Alagna, farther up the valley ran the same road, but shortly that dwindled to a narrow way, to be followed only on

foot. Innumerable paths led up to pastures where the peasants drove their cattle and sheep and goats, certain high passes wound between the mountains on either side, but our village was strung like a final bead on this one thread, there was no other road up or down.

A beautiful walk it was, charming enough to beckon me on, no matter what might be the path. Past the foaming brook at our door, past fields where flowers grew amidst the grass, turning by the enormous boulder, gaily decked with ferns and blossoming Alpenrosen, round which the river swung in its course over the rapids, pausing to admire my laburnum with its wealth of gold, or to gaze at the snowy peaks of Monte Rosa as they flashed out suddenly, far up in the heavens, I kept by the side of the running water, listening to its varied song. Now an island might be seen in mid-stream, here a brook hurried across the path where the tree-shadows lay deepest and only a white thread shone out in the dim recesses of the wood, or a second streamlet bounded down over the mossy stones and under the prostrate logs to fall with a melodious plash into a hollow, brown with leaves. Under a grove of beeches some kindly soul had set a wooden bench on a mound, and from this coign of vantage the wayfarer might trace the windings of the broader stream. Over that wooden fence, in a patch of meadow land, grew stalks of tall nodding lilies, the

plum-colored petals turned far back on the stem, like a rolling turban, and indeed the showy flowers were called Turk's Cap lilies.

Farther on, the meadows spread wide and level for a long distance, and beside it the river flowed tranquilly, with no hint of the rapids before it in its course, or of the tumult out of which it had come. At a spot marked by a little wayside chapel, with frescoed walls, perched high on a grassy bank, the road ascended and the mountain side drew closer, the rocky channel narrowed to a deep gorge. The water boiled and raged in its imprisonment, seething in whirlpools, foaming white over rocky, jagged points, rushing madly past the perpendicular walls of stone far below the road. In a more quiet spot it ran swiftly beneath a stone bridge with a single arch, grass-grown and picturesque; behind it the tree covered slope of the mountain, a distant waterfall shining against the dark background; below it ferns and bushes blown hither and thither restlessly by the air above the rapid current.

Higher in the valley was a scene of desolation. Some winter avalanche had hurled great fragments of rock from the heights, the boulders were strewn on the plain in confusion, splintered and rent by the fall, but on their rough sides the beneficent healing power of Nature manifested itself. Vegetation had sprung up, in the crevices and seams grew tiny blos-

soming plants, delicate yellow violets, wild purple pansies, while clumps of the crimson Alpine rose flourished on the gray ledges. It was indeed a valley of rocks, but softened and beautified by the touch of life, for the flowers bloomed, the shrubs grew green and luxuriant and the sun poured his beams over it all.

Just above the rock-strewn glen were the buildings of the gold mines, the precious metal having been found high on a neighboring peak and the ore brought down to be worked. Beyond this point the way grew more rough and difficult, hardly more than a track among the scattered rocks and round the base of the projecting cliffs, the river running far below the steep slope.

Turning a sharp corner in the narrow defile, I came upon a rude foot bridge with a long log barring the farther end. A flock of sheep were nibbling the scanty grass on the hillside, and inquisitive as usual about the intruder, they crowded to the barrier and stood watching me, bleating incessantly, while a tame goat, with a tinkling bell about its neck, ran up and down in excitement. The herd-boy, with his dog, came down to see what was happening, his wooden shoes clattering over the rocks, and with native courtesy he dragged away the log so that the Signora might pass. He was a handsome lad of sixteen years, dark-eyed and rosy-cheeked, and we interchanged a few friendly words while he told me the names of the

different peaks, and that a double waterfall, dashing from a great height to join the river, was the Acqua Bianca or White Water; a pretty name for the snowy cascade which leaped madly from the rocks above.

Here I ended my walk up the Val Sesia, there was absolutely no path beyond, save such as a mountaineer might find and follow. Some miles further were the sources of the Sesia itself, in the streams of water issuing from the melting glacier and finding their way through the debris of rocks at its edge. Milky white, at first, with the imprisoned bubbles of air, dashing itself clear against the rocks, plunging down the ravines, running through the meadows and beneath the trees, past Alagna and the smaller villages on its banks, curving through Scopello's fields, flowing more sedately by Varallo where it gained fresh strength from the Sermenza and the Mastalone as well as from the numberless brooks which came to join its waters, it sped on through the lower valley to join the Po.

One sunny day, after a long pouring rain, transformed on the heights to sparkling snow, I ventured forth in the clear crisp air. It was delicious to drink in the pure freshness, to feel the breath of new fallen snow on my cheek like a winter day at home, it was exhilarating and inspiring to be out of doors. I wandered far up the valley road, stopping at last where I could catch sight of the Acqua Bianca as it fell over the rocks in increased volume, for the lower

snow wreaths were melting fast in the July sun, though the air was cool and almost sharp as it blew over the snow-covered peaks. Standing in one spot, I could count a dozen waterfalls on all sides, leaping straight from the summits, pouring down over the rocks, here plunging through a narrow cleft, there running full and strong through a well-worn and familiar channel. The mountain sides seemed honeycombed with streams; they apparently gushed out of the bare rock, newborn torrents. By afternoon, doubtless, some of these cascades would have disappeared, luckily I had caught them at the full, and watched long to see the downward rush, too far away to hear the sound of the falling water which was lost in the roar of the river beside me.

THE BEECHWOOD.

Today let us climb the hillside which rises to the west of Alagna, and make more intimate acquaintance with the white brook we have seen rushing across the road just outside the village. We go slowly up the steep path, worn smooth by the peasants who travel it to reach the few huts far above. The tall seeding grass waves lazily, the blossoms nod at us as we pass along the sunny bank where the narrow way scarcely admits of more than one pair of feet, and the bare-headed country girls stand aside for the strangers with a pleasant "Buona sera," for this is really afternoon.

Now and again we turn to catch our breath, for the path mounts steeply, and to look at the village spread flat and open below us, the white ribbon of road winding down beside the Sesia's shining waters to distant Riva. There the twin church towers, sharpening into spires, so well set off by the wooded background, look but a stone's throw away.

Hark, there is the sound of water, though as yet no stream is visible. A few steps farther, however, bring us to a grove of trees and in a moment we see the brook, still white and foaming in these higher reaches of its course. With many a twist and turn it rushes down from the upper valley, a most enchanting brook as we watch it from the frail swaying bridge. Looking up stream, we catch the gleams of light on the little waves and rapids as they dip into sight underneath the leaves where the channel makes a sudden curve, and come running to greet us; below the water is darker as it plunges down several feet into a natural basin, worn in the rocky bed, and then recovering itself goes on its impetuous way. We no longer wonder at the whiteness far below, it has no time to grow demure and brush away the tangles of foam. It would be delightful to follow it far up to the source in the snowfields of the Col d' Olen, the pass which would lead us over into Switzerland and to the summit of Monte Rosa, but this was hardly practicable of an afternoon, so after tarrying long on the bridge beneath

the leafy branches we pursued our way to the "Bosco de' Faggi," the ancient beech wood above us.

Winding round a jutting grassy cliff where the path seemed better adapted to adventurous sheep than to an inexperienced climber, we turned sharply upward past several wooden huts stored with hay and household implements, meeting a couple of woodcutters as they came down hill, and a herdsman with his dog. The way was steep and stony, the great trees stood beside it and between their trunks we could look off into the valley, shut in by the mountains. Not towards Monte Rosa, unfortunately. All outlook in that direction was precluded by the heavy growth of the forest, clothing the nearer spur.

It was a beautiful wood-walk under the spreading branches of the giant beech trees, the rising ground strewn with moss-grown boulders, held fast in the relentless grasp of the bare roots which stretched across them like sinewy fingers. Deep shadows filled the forest, the thick layers of green leaves shut out the sunlight, all but the few rays which found their way between the boughs and lighted the smooth gray bark, but on the edge of the hillside lay the brightness, and presently we came out on the grass where we settled ourselves to watch the afternoon light and shade. At our feet the ground dropped almost sheer to a great distance, covered with bushes and saplings till the descent was lost in the tree-grown ravine far below.

Through it we could catch the glimmer of our merry brook and see the shining thread winding onward. From the glaciers and snowfields above it came down to more familiar ways, but it still kept its wild, free nature.

We watched the light on the hill slopes, watched the shadows fill the valley and creep over the ridges, the sun sank glowing behind the great mountain at our back and we took our way homeward through the beech wood, past the slippery path on the edge of the cliff, pausing again on the bridge to watch the stream and listen to its many voices blended into a musical harmony.

BESIDE THE ALP.

Turning from the path on the farther bank of the Sesia, by which I had made my first acquaintance with the neighborhood, I walked, one morning, beside the clear running streamlet which on that first afternoon I had crossed below, by the flower-set fields. It was a stony track, not much more, leading me past three or four chalets, one perched directly above its neighbor, till I had gained a sufficient height to look down upon the Val Sesia, and see the church tower of Alagna nestled in green tree tops. The bright thread of water which had at first kept by my side was already some distance below me, but I climbed higher yet on the alp, meeting a woman trudging steadily down the narrow

path, a huge bundle of fresh hay on her head, and later a man in hunting dress who told me I could go still further, though it was steep. I halted now and then to rest, but went on bravely over the smooth, slippery pebbles and jagged shelving stones, and round a projecting rock like a grassy pulpit. At length I was high enough for my own satisfaction, so sitting down on a smooth stone under the shade of a convenient tree, for the sun was hot, I gazed out upon the world beneath. Far away wound the Sesia through meadow and thicket where the mountains shut it in, the distant summits rising and falling like earth billows. Nearer were dense woods beneath which, I knew, ran the road by the river, already familiar, although from this point it was not visible.

On the north I could see plainly the pinnacles and glaciers of Monte Rosa, white and glistening in their snow mantle, seemingly but a hand's breadth away in the transparent air, though reason assured me it was many miles to those shining peaks. It was a vision of ineffable beauty set there in the heavens, far above the lower earth.

Nearby, I looked across the narrow ravine, where the streamlet ran fast, to another upland pasture and there I saw a woman mowing and tossing the hay. So close did the clear air bring the grassy slope that I fancied I could hear the swish of her scythe as she swung it with a strong and practised arm. I watched

her with interest, the only human being I could see from my lofty perch, as she deftly cut one small patch of grass after another, tossed and turned it and spread it to dry in the blazing sun. Twelve strokes rang out from the church tower, and she left her labor and went down the slope homeward. It seemed lonely on my rock, now that the human element had disappeared, and with one last look at the snow covered pinnacles against the blue, I too retraced my steps, turning aside to cross the brook on a bridge leading to the hay field. A path on the other side tempted me, and I followed it upward beside the stream which grew more frolicsome as it ascended the valley. It danced and sang over the stones, it joined hands with another brook which came rushing down through a woody cleft. My own path was crossed by several tiny rills which welled out of the herbage and made the way fresh and green. On a grass covered boulder grew a luxuriant rose bush. Heine's poem, "Roslein auf der Haiden," came to my lips, as I saw it standing quite alone in its loveliness on the little promontory, the long graceful sprays, waving as the breeze whispered to them, set with wide open pink blossoms, single-petalled as befits a wild rose, the deeper tinted buds on the very tips of the branches. It was exquisite; the single bush blooming here in the solitude beside the happy brook which sang aloud for joy.

Still higher I climbed, allured by the sound of fall-

ing waters, and coming out on a green plateau, overshadowed by a fluttering birch tree, I saw before me three cascades, one above another, where the stream dashed hurriedly down the rocks. What a charming picture it was! the eager flood rushing tumultuously over the shelving wall, and falling into a basin below my standing place, where it took breath before starting down hill once more. The rocky sides of the narrow gorge were wet and glistening with spray, and on them grew little plants and long drooping ferns, rejoicing in the perpetual moisture and moving in the breath of the plashing water.

So spoiled was I by the lavish bestowal of beauty all about me that I grumbled because the rose bush and the waterfall could not be seen at one glance, but when at length I reluctantly turned away, and passed by the spot where the roses bloomed, perhaps unseen till now, I realized that each picture was complete in itself, that a shade more might have taken from the beauty of both, and so went home contented.

LA CASCATA.

In looking back on my brief stay in the valley, far up among the mountains, I see the gleam of white water as it falls across the hillside, I hear the thrill of its downward rush, and I remember one morning when La Cascata revealed herself, as if new-created for me alone.

I desired to go exploring. In passing down the road from Alagna, I had noticed against the dark background of trees, in an angle of the mountain wall to my right, the sheen of falling water, being told it was La Cascata. No one seemed to know exactly how to reach it, though it was near at hand, so I decided to find out for myself. The spirit of adventure and discovery may be cultivated in miniature, and I set forth valiantly, that lovely morning, as if in search of an unknown world.

Soon the immediate village was left behind. I passed the church and its neighboring houses, exchanging a good morning with some of my very youthful acquaintances, who smiled broadly but were unable to respond in words, so extreme was their shyness before the strange lady.

Past a many windowed pension where diligent airing and sweeping was going on in the rooms opening on to the wide balcony above the flower-bordered path; evidently the looked-for family was coming to bestow itself in the well-furnished, most comfortable and altogether delightful apartment with meals, offered by the large sign on the front of the house. Past picturesque brown chalets, hung with green herbs and sauce pans and wooden rakes, where children and dogs rolled together on the sunny doorstep and the hens stepped briskly about, while the good wives were busily washing beneath wooden shelters. On one side was a

stone fountain in a courtyard, and here a small boy and girl were standing on tiptoe to dip into the basin.

Now I was beyond the straggling houses and my eye could follow the winding road till it vanished in the distance, could see the mountains on either side, narrowing as if to enclose the valley, I could hear the Sesia noisily running by, on the further side of the meadow. In the field beside me, a woman was hard at work mowing; it must have been tiresome to swing the scythe in the hot sun, but she did it manfully, stopping a moment to whet the shining blade and greet me as I passed, no doubt deeming me an idle, useless person, sauntering leisurely by while there was work to do in the world.

Ah! there was the gleam of water on the cliff, visible for a few seconds and then lost behind some intervening trees, but I could catch a distant sound, and felt sure it was the voice of the cascade. Hastening my steps, I came to a stream, hurrying under the bridge in many a swirling eddy and foaming rapid, for the bed was stony, and it came with a rush from higher ground.

Low alders and saplings grew on the banks, farther away I caught the glint of laburnum gold through the leaves. This must be the brook fed by La Cascata, but apparently there was no path, except across the hay field to a couple of houses beyond. Soon, however, a paved cart track led up to a higher field, and I

followed it, turning at the top of the short ascent to find a charming view of Monte Rosa, rising just above Alagna. Green slopes framed the snow fields and high peaks, the gray tower stood in the foreground, across the fields which stretched to the clustering houses at its base. How white and beautiful the great mountain rose against the blue dome of sky, sparkling in the sunlight!

But now I followed the track, dwindling to a foot path between the grass and flowers, which led me across the field to a long low building, apparently a farmstead, though afterwards I learned it was used as barracks for some soldiers who were quartered in the region. Here at last was a suggestion of my goal in a notice on a board, setting forth that La Cascata might be reached by turning sharply to the right, and hastening across a corner of the field, I soon could hear the roar of water, growing louder and louder. In genuine excitement I hurried on, seeing weather beaten roofs and stone walls before me, and found myself in the middle of what looked like a deserted village. Half a dozen stone buildings, the walls crumbling, the roofs fallen in, stood desolate and forsaken. No sign of life was to be seen as I peered within the open doorways, where the weeds grew rank and tall, and an occasional young tree had found a foothold, stretching its boughs across an empty casement. I wondered why the place was thus abandoned

to the summer sun and winter storms. Had some sudden outbreak of pestilence alarmed the inhabitants fleeing before the unknown terror, had the people grown too poverty stricken to repair the dilapidated walls or mend the hole in the roof, or had it been simply an exodus to another and more convenient site? I could not tell. At all events there stood the empty walls, and with the cascade sounding loud in my ears, I could not stop to question the past.

Along a natural terrace, grass-grown and tree-shaded, I went quickly, to stand still and look wide-eyed at La Cascata. The full torrent plunged headlong from the cliff, all broken into foam, white and feathery, by its leap of sixty feet or more. The spray was blown towards me by the wind of its descent, on the projecting ground just in front grew young trees and bushes, their leaves glistening in the mist, while venturesome blossoms clung to the brink, stirred unceasingly by the air-currents and flourishing luxuriantly in the perpetual moisture. On the dark shining cliffs beside the waterfall, graceful ferns were swaying back and forth, for the self created breeze was strong and my own cheek was wet with the blowing spray. The basin below had been hollowed by the continual dashing of the great column of water; at its outlet a rude dam had been built, and a portion of the water was conducted in wooden troughs along the face of the bare rock, perhaps to supply a couple of cot-

tages at some distance, evidently the same I had seen across the hay field.

High walls shut in the cataract, a dark gray setting for the white pillar as it shot swiftly downward with a loud continuous roar, yet diminishing and increasing in definite rhythm, the flood by the basin rising and ebbing at regular intervals as the stream poured from above. I could not see the very commencement of the cascade, a corner of outstanding rock hid its first slip over the abyss, I could only watch the rush as it sped past the dark, wet cliff, and look upward beside it on the mountain side where birches and oaks and spruces clung tenaciously to the thin soil, anchored in the seams of rock. Laburnums grew along the crevices, and the yellow drooping clusters seemed to vie with the great white blossoms of spray.

The fascination of falling water is never ending. I sat for an hour or more on the tumbledown roof of one of the deserted buildings in full view of the spectacle for which I had come, watching the first wild leap from the height, the swift rush in mid-stream, the plunge into the agitated pool below. It was impossible to comprehend it all in one glance, I must take it separately.

My roof top was in the warm sunlight, a step nearer brought me into the region of cool wind and driving mist, and I alternated between the two, venturing to the very edge to look upward at the falling flood while

the wet spray dashed in my face, then retreating to the sunny warmth and dry soft air. Longing for a picture to reproduce the beauty and yet conscious of my probable failure to secure it, I wandered up and down the amphitheatre, seeing La Cascata as she shone white and dazzling in unobstructed view, looking at the falling column of foam through pine branches and between tall tree trunks, always a vision of loveliness, though differing at each outlook.

Below the basin, the stream, so rudely interrupted in its course, became a stream again, running in mad career over the rocks, beneath a couple of logs with a sapling for handrail which spanned the turbulent waters, rushing by the high, steep, wooded banks which rose into the open sunlit field I had traversed.

The sun's direct rays could not penetrate to the dark corner where La Cascata reigned supreme, the shadows of the high cliffs fell upon it even at noonday. I wished it were possible to see it sparkling and glittering in full sunlight, but the sense of mystery and remoteness might have been lessened, it would have been perhaps too brilliant, too spectacular.

Several times, during my stay at Alagna, I returned to the spot, finding an upper plateau above the ruined walls, where a stream of water led by a conduit from the basin poured into one of the stone houses. I learned that the place had not been a village, only the buildings connected with the copper mines, now dis-

used and neglected, the work being transferred to the border of the highway, as I had seen it below. I was glad there was no hum of machinery, no loud voices of workmen to mar the quiet and grandeur of the scene. It was more fitting that the stream should hurl itself over the precipice with only the trees and rocks to look on, only the flowers and ferns and bushes to watch its impetuous leap, naught but the blue sky to bend above it and the white clouds to sail across the opening, while the cool wet wind blew through the pass, bearing beauty and freshness on its wings.

UNDER THE ALDERS.

Having penetrated to the shady recesses where the white cascade with its roar of many waters is enshrined, and watched the stream recover itself, after its venturesome leap into mid-air, ere starting once more gaily on its way, let us follow its course as it flows onward to join the Sesia.

The brook runs merrily beneath the bridge where we saw it first, and turning a sharp corner, after its plunge down the steep bank, it follows the course of the highroad, though at a lower and more respectful distance. Still sheltered by the friendly alders from the glare of the summer sun, it flows swiftly along, breaking here and there into dimpling rapids as the stones raise their heads above the water, passing more

quietly in the stretches where grass and flowers grow on either hand and the level ground harbors little pools and inlets between the low trees, lapping the roots with a contented murmur. From the road the brook is only audible, not visible, till we pass the sheds where girls are washing the copper ore in slanting troughs, full of running water, a primitive method. They turn to look at us as we go by, and we exchange a good morning. Finding our way across the grass, stopping to gather a few of the strange blossoms, now grown familiar though their names are still unknown, we come out upon the edge of the brook.

Above it lean the alders, a numerous company, the banks on both sides are lined with the trees, and their outstretched arms meet overhead in a bower of green shade. A wooden bench offers its hospitality and we sit there on the very margin of the stream and look and listen as the water ripples past. Never ending, always fresh and new are the voices of the little wavelets breaking into white curves over the stones, running on with the story only half told. How much each drop must have to say of its wild journey before this quiet haven is reached, whispering about it to the ferns on the bank, murmuring to the stones of its adventurous plunge into the unknown, paying homage to the bending alders as a pilgrim from a distant country. Little do the plants and the stones and the saplings know of the far away mountain cleft, dark

and mysterious, filled with the incessant roar of water, little do they guess of the confident leap into space which each tiny drop must take in turn, no hesitation, no withdrawing possible as it slips over the brink amid foam and spray. Even the larger river to whose bosom the alder brook is hastening can boast of no such rush from the heights, except it be far up on the border of the great glacier where its birth is heralded by the ice and snow. The waters run past, a gentle breeze freshens the sunlit air, the shadows fall upon the wooden bench, it is all dreamy, restful, full of peace. We say to ourselves, let us stay here all the day, while the quiet fills and blesses our souls, but we are not yet akin to the lotus-eaters, we are soon possessed once more of the spirit of unrest.

Wandering through the thicket which stretches far along the level shore, seeing nothing but the slender stems of the alders and the green undergrowth, hearing only the low music of the brook and the rustle of the leaves, we come close to the water's edge. There is a moss grown plank thrown across the channel with a branch for hand rail, and we stand in mid-stream, gazing at the countless wavelets as they hurry down through the shady places to our feet, looking after them, a ceaseless procession, on their way to the river below, to swell its volume before they reach the final resting place of these valley waters. Up stream, life is coming to meet us, eager, impetuous, full of hope

and untried powers, down stream, we fancy the brook moves more placidly, it is an old story as the water runs under the bridge.

We cross over and venture ashore bodily, like explorers. Is it an island or the mainland still. We do not know, but a faint footpath leads up the low bank and we follow it. Here the trees are taller, the alders give place to maples and chestnuts, a few white birches shine out in an open glade, then the boughs close in again and we go on through the bushes and ferns. Now pine branches wave their green plumes far above our heads and the ground is clear of undergrowth where the brown needles have fallen soft and thick, it is a sunny open spot sheltered on all sides by the wood, spicy and odorous, but we push on over the slippery hollows for we hear the noise of water beyond. Following the sound, we come out upon a grassy strip of land, decked with flowers, lying in the full sunshine. Below us runs the broad Sesia, over sandy shallows, by deep dark pools, a swift current bearing it onward. On the farther shore lies a little village, the few brown houses creeping up the slope, the mountains rising beyond.

As we look down its course, we see where the island or point of land, whichever it may be, tapers and terminates as the alder brook comes to join its neighbor at the foot of a high mountain spur, whose side, bare and gravel-worn, shows where perhaps a land slide in

some spring freshet carried away the trees and shrubs which once covered it with waving banners.

Doubtless this strip of land to which the bridge gives access, is well known to the peasants, for there are various tracks across it under the trees, but there is a delightful feeling that we have discovered it ourselves. The river is very blue, for the cloudless sky bends over it, and the sun is reflected in every ripple as it glitters on its way, gathering every little brook to itself, rejecting no offering, however small, as the waters come down from the heights to join it.

How broad it looks, in contrast to the stream under the alders, and yet as we slowly wander back and stand on the wooden bridge, the song is sweeter and more intimate, it is close and companionable, like the Sesia in its upper waters where we first learned to know and love it. We are glad to add one more to our list of these mountain brooks, to possess yet another memory of clear running water, of sunlit ripples and shadowed reaches. Each one, I must repeat it, is quite unlike any other, it will have its own place in the gallery of pictures as we shall look at them far away, when their beauty is but remembrance.

LA CALDAIA.

A path leads out of the village, slowly turning as it ascends the hillside. Will you follow it with me and let us see whither it will take us? Crossing the hay-field on a causeway, we pass a large comfortable house, whose owner is evidently a well-to-do farmer with a fine scorn for the inquisitive tourist, for on his fence is a sign to the effect that this is *not* a public way. The path continues up hill, a little rivulet runs across it through the grass and in a moment we are in front of several chalets, picturesque and thrifty both. A second streamlet has been skilfully conducted into a large square stone trough in the yard, the sparkling water runs continually from the wooden spout and the housewife is busy with her washing. A delightful way of doing work, to stand in the bright sunlight, a fresh breeze stirring the air, clear water ready at hand with its perpetual change and motion. We inquire if the way to the Val d' Otro lies in this direction and receive a pleasant assent and a cheerful good morning from the sturdy peasant woman. Round the corner of the house, in the full sunshine, sits an old woman, wrinkled and bent, a close frilled cap framing her brown face and snowy hair, a keen, intelligent expression in her bright eyes. She is trimming green herbs from a basket at her feet, evidently for salad, since oil is cheap and a dish of salad is an important addition to the limited bill of fare.

Cheery old soul, she is glad to have us stop and exchange a few words, in fact she talks with volubility, though even my more accomplished companion cannot quite make out her patois, but goodwill and friendliness is understood on both sides. The poor do not always envy those better off in this world's goods. This old peasant grandmother is contented in her surroundings, she has the blue sky overhead and the soft air about her, light work for her toilworn knotted fingers to do, a spinning wheel stands on the step beside her where one of her daughter's children is playing. Her wants are simple, and for the summer, at least, living is pleasant and comfortable. No doubt she looked upon us with compassion for being driven up the steep path along the mountain side while she, more fortunate, could stay at home.

We leave behind us the little group of houses and wander slowly upward, the bank at one side at exactly the proper height to enable us to see the field flowers. Everywhere beneath the grass and clover we find the friendly pansy, wild here but like the purple and yellow Ladies' Delight of our gardens at home. The blue violets have gone, but we found the real yellow violet far up the valley, a few days ago. With the pansies grows the blue forget me not, tiny flowers not like the abundance and luxuriance we have seen in Tirol, and here too is a low creeping plant with brilliant yellow blossoms, a rich bit of color among the rest. These

form a setting, a background for the taller and more showy plants which flourish on the edge of the field, the pale pink spike of the snake weed and deeper purple head of the campion, the delicate Alpine lily with its pure white bells drooping on the slender stalk, the deep color, like that of the sky, of the blue bells tossing their heads in the flowering grass, the brilliant orange of the arnica like a flame colored daisy, and the stout reddish purple thistle with its feathery head. All these grow beside us as we climb the steep path, stopping frequently to gather yet another blossom, or to look down upon the meadows where the river reflects the sun, dancing in its bed, and the high mountains stand gravely above it.

Presently we turn beneath the trees to discover more flowers, the graceful stalks of crowfoot, white cups borne aloft on the branching stem, and contrasting most charmingly with the rich color of the blue bells. Wood pinks line the way, peeping out behind the rocks and under the bushes, just below us on the steep slope is a clump of Turk's Cap lilies, tall and straight with the curling purple petals and dark stamens.

The wood grows thicker, the way rises steeply, it is like a stone staircase with low narrow treads, for these mountain roads are all paved to make them durable. Otherwise the torrents in spring and autumn would wash them away and the people would find it a difficult matter to bring the hay and brushwood down from

the high alps. This is one of the passes over the mountains into the neighboring valley and so is kept in excellent repair though it is narrow and steep.

Now we come out into the open again and can look straight down over the slope near the Cascata and hear its deep bass note like an organ. A narrow track leads downwards to the scattered houses, a short cut for the peasants on their way home from the upland meadows. Still farther we go till the gorge is reached wherein runs the stream and we can see the white curtain of water far below. On the edge of the ravine grows a solitary bush of sweet briar and one of us manages to pull a few sprigs, so delicious and refreshing as we crush the leaves between our fingers.

The way is long and hard, doubling on itself as it turns at a very sharp angle, but always rising. At a corner in the rocky wall stands a shrine of the Madonna, an iron grating protecting the waxen image of the Mother and Child. Before it some fresh mountain blossoms are laid on the little ledge, and an old peasant is sitting on the stone seat in front, resting his heavy bundle of sticks on the edge of the shrine. What better place could there be to lay aside his burden for a space, even though to his simple mind the material rest is more present perhaps than the spiritual uplifting. To me it is always touching to see the people praying beside these wayside chapels and the children shyly placing their handful of flowers before Our Lady's

feet; crude and inartistic though the image may be, it stands to them for something far above the earth on which they live and work and suffer.

But we must hasten or our goal will never be reached. On and up, through the forest, along the mountain side, we come out on a bare knoll where a wood cutter's hut stands by a stream flashing swiftly down in the sunlight. It is exactly the spot where a fairy story should begin, a little girl living quite alone with the old woodcutter and wandering far away into the forest, where one day she meets a fairy or is rescued from a wicked enchanter by a gallant young prince.

Listen! what is that distant sound? It is like the roar of La Cascata, but surely we are too high above that for its sound to reach our ears. Eagerly we go on, the laggard of the party taking fresh courage and hastening as much as the rough path will allow. The trees are changing their character. Instead of the beeches and oaks, the maples and chestnuts and birches which have covered the slopes, we find tall spruces, straight and symmetrical like dark green pyramids, growing all about us. The path narrows to a single track among the ferns and bushes as it skirts the rounded knoll, and in an instant more the distant booming becomes near and deafening, we look down into a deep, deep gorge with precipitous sides. In the angle of the cliffs is a great sheet of water dropping

sheer into the basin below, carved through the long years out of the solid rock, and fringed with little green plants, trembling in the air of the downward rush. It is La Caldaia, the boiling caldron, as the name signifies, and this it is that we have climbed all these weary steps to see.

For a time we are content to look and listen, it seems a new born marvel created for us, we cannot believe that it has always been here, unseen and unheeded, for not many of the peasants who toil up the pass care to exert themselves to climb still further aside when their own way lies past the hut of the wood cutter.

As we become a little more familiar with the scene before us we realize that this is the same adventurous brook which lower down gives us the surprise and beauty of La Cascata. We were wiser than we knew to take that first, for La Caldaia is not only twice the height of the former, but the whole spot is more wild, more savage, grander, more stupendous.

Presently we venture down the slippery edge of the slope, the earth moist and uneven, the track scarcely discernible, clinging to the bushes and steadying ourselves by the tree trunks, for a mis-step would send us far down on the rocks. At length we reach the bottom safely and stand on a broad flat slab, looking across the foaming caldron to the fall itself, slowly letting our eyes travel upward amid the spray and foam

to the spot where the water glides over the edge. We discover that it makes two leaps, the first from one side, then dashing, with no pause, straight down a hundred feet or more into the basin where it boils and rages and circles round and round, finally rushing turbulently over rocks and boulders, a torrent indeed, to find its course again interrupted where we had seen it, far below. This is a contrast, truly, to the quiet stream running under the alder boughs and by the green shore.

The great chasm is dark and gloomy, the high walls of rock shut out the sun, almost the light itself, at noonday there is twilight. The spray becomes a fine rain as we stand close by the whirlpool of waters, the tide rises and falls, now washing over the stones, now retreating, the plants and bushes which grow on the edge or cling to the crevices far above our heads are glistening with moisture, all the way up the bank the ground is wet. It is a beautiful sight to look far up the gorge where the sky is visible between the cliffs and see the white wonder falling, falling, never pausing in its flow, always pouring from the heights, no haste, no rest, till the end is reached and the foaming waters churn and roar as they strive to take breath and start on the new journey.

A greater waterfall would be in some ways less impressive than this lonely cascade, hidden in the heart of the mountain with dim shadows about it, the wild

flowers and trees standing near undisturbed, so remote from the irreverent and unseeing passerby. It could be grasped by the eye and mind, it was not too overwhelming, and yet the impression of awe at the mighty, resistless power, the irresistible impulse, was not lacking.

Very silently we climbed up the difficult height where each step must be set with care, and watched the rush of white foam as it poured into the abyss, wondering what still greater wonders might exist in the higher regions of its course. At least, we had witnessed a sight to be remembered, different from all else in our wanderings, and the lonely cleft in the mountains, filled with the roar and tumult of many waters, would keep us company when we were far away.

So we may bid farewell to our valley in all its varied beauty. The broad river which we have followed far up into the loneliness of the great peaks, the clear streamlet by the alp where the solitary rose bush blossoms for itself alone, the gay impetuous brook dashing noisily below the beech wood, the torrent which plunges down recklessly, not once only but a second time, to find itself after all a demure little stream, all these and many more give us the right to call it the valley of streams.

Unknown, save to few, perhaps one of its delights is the very sense of discovery and possession which I have tried to suggest as the joy of the infrequent way-

farer, the charm of remoteness, of an undiscovered country, of something peculiarly his own, as he wanders up and down the hillsides, and gazes with admiration at the lofty snowcapped peaks, and follows the myriad water courses which run tunefully and rejoicingly through the valley of streams.

